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JOHN STUART MILL

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A STUDY

OF HIS PHILOSOPHY

BY

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PREFACE

THIS book professes to be only what its name suggests — a study of Mill's Philosophy: its aim is to examine some ideas which underlie his work rather than to give a summary of his opinions, or a detailed account of his contributions to the philosophical sciences. In a book addressed chiefly to students of philosophy it seemed best to say little of the life or even of the intellectual development of Mill; and where biography does occur its introduction is largely an accident. If my criticism or interpretation of Mill should seem to suggest philosophy other than his, I hardly feel impelled to apologise for

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this; for systems of thought are never understood except in their relations to one another.

References to Mill's works are made to the most recent Library Editions, except in the cases of the 'Logic,' 'Political Economy,' and 'Liberty,' in which it seemed better to refer to the original People's Editions.[1]

In connection with the special subject of Mill's Philosophy, I have laid myself under obligations to the work of those who have preceded me: to the late Professor Green's Lectures on Mill's Logic; to Professor Bain's 'John Stuart Mill'; to Mr Courtney's 'Metaphysics of J. S. Mill,' and to his attractive 'Life of John Stuart Mill'; to Professor Masson's appreciative and pointed criticism;[2] to Professor Höffding's 'Einleitung in die Englische Philosophie unserer Zeit'; and to the late M. Taine's delightful study.[3] Other

[1] Messrs Longmans, Green, & Co.

[2] *V.* Recent British Philosophy: a Review with Criticisms; including some Comments on Mr Mill's Answer to Sir William Hamilton.

[3] Le Positivisme anglais, étude sur Stuart Mill.

and more detailed obligations are acknowledged, so far as possible, where they occur.

The whole of this book has been read in proof by the Rev. A. Halliday Douglas, of Cambridge. Part of it has also been read in manuscript by Professor Andrew Seth, of this University, and all of it by Professor Henry Jones, of Glasgow University, and by Mr J. A. Smith, of Balliol College, Oxford. I am indebted to all these gentlemen for criticisms and suggestions; and my thanks are especially due to Professor Jones, but for whose help my work must have been still more imperfect than it is.

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JOHN STUART MILL

CHAPTER I

INTRODUCTORY

The work of John Stuart Mill marks an impressive transition in many departments of thought. There is probably no other English writer who has had so definite an effect on the development of so many philosophical sciences; and there is none whose personal philosophy contains more striking evidence of radical changes in the speculative outlook of his generation.

Current ideas of Mill's philosophical work do but scant justice to its nature and proportions. Like many other philosophers, he has been "more criticised than read"; and the criticism

to which he has been subjected has generally been rather a controversial disproof of certain theories, common to him with other writers, than an attempt to discover the distinctive ways of thinking to which his philosophy owes its special interest.

We inherit, for the most part, that clerical prejudice against Mill which resulted from his attack on Mansel, in whose Agnosticism distressed but imprudent apologists found temporary shelter; or we generalise about "lack of ideality," and suggest a "pig-philosophy"; or, if our penetration be somewhat greater, we are still apt to content ourselves with finding Mill to be a "sensationalist."

In all this there is little enough explanation of that in Mill which yet needs to be explained —his real contribution to the development of knowledge and practice; and indeed this conception of him, which makes him merely an inconsistent and eccentric disciple of Hume, omits all that is most individual in his philosophical attempt. The following pages are intended to show that such an account of his philosophy is misleading and one-sided, and that,

even where it has most appearance of truth, it is incomplete.

It is not, indeed, to be denied that Mill is deeply imbued with the sensationalist prejudice,—that he accepts from his English predecessors that conception of knowledge, which makes it a mere complex of sensations and ideas, supposed to be capable of existing in some degree independently of the synthesis in which knowledge consists. He expressly affirms this view of knowledge, and it affects his idea of explanation. It leads him to conceive things as finally reducible to sense-impressions, and even to regard such impressions as the very type or equivalent of reality. It engenders a suspicion of the constructive part which thought plays in experience—a suspicion which betrays itself in Mill's whole account of knowledge and action. He constantly tends to think of things as naturally and really isolated from one another, and to treat the relations in which we know them as fictions, which do not belong to them as they actually are. He is apt to regard thought as merely the effect of things, and to ignore the extent to which the very being of things as we know them

consists of relations which reveal themselves in thought.

It is in this spirit that he adopts Hume's conception of the relation of cause and effect—the conception which finds in it a mere succession of subjective states; and his tendency to see in knowledge only a series of mental changes connects itself not simply with this theory of causality, but with the more general refusal to regard the relations which thought constitutes and determines as really belonging to the nature of things.

This fictitious isolation of the subject from the object of knowledge, which Mill inherited from his predecessors, plays, as we shall see, a most real part in his logical theory; and it is of hardly less account in his conception of what conduct is and ought to be. It commits him, so far as his explicit theory goes, to thinking that desire is necessarily for personal pleasure; and it makes a hedonistic conception of moral good natural and almost inevitable for him.

This individualism, then, which appears as sensationalism in the theory of knowledge, and as egoism in that of conduct, forms the general groundwork of Mill's philosophical work. It

represents the point of view at which he found himself when he began to think, and which he never wholly abandoned. On the other hand, it is matter of common knowledge that this is not Mill's whole philosophy. His account of human life contains elements that are almost explicitly at variance with his inherited creed.

The theory of Induction, for example, which is his most important contribution to the science of logic, avowedly rests upon a doctrine of causality which is not that of sensationalism. He makes use of a conception of the causal relation in which it is regarded not as mere succession of ideas, but as unconditional dependence of fact upon fact. In the same way, his recognition of a self, other than transient states of consciousness, however unsatisfactory the manner of it may be, betrays a consciousness that knowledge is not merely a sequence of ideas. Still more significant of this conflict within his philosophy is the profoundly ethical cast of his Hedonism—his tendency to subordinate the hedonistic conception of moral good to a way of regarding it which makes it consist, not in a mere effect upon feeling, but in objective personal qualities.

These elements in Mill's philosophy have not been by any means unremarked. But they have very generally been regarded as mere eccentricities on his part — as results which he obtained by a leap away from his serious thinking, and to which he was in no sense entitled. Even those whose sympathy with such ways of thinking might be expected to be most active have been disposed to see in them inconsistencies on which an *argumentum ad hominem* against Mill's empiricism might be founded, rather than to treat them with any cordiality or esteem.

It would be idle to deny the justification which exists for such an attitude as this. However poor a virtue consistency may be, in science at all events, the effort to attain it is the condition of all real excellence; and for philosophy, methods must always possess a greater importance than results. "Wolves in sheep's clothing" have been frequent, and the effects of good intentions have been calamitous, in philosophy; mistaken methods and prejudices must not pass unchallenged—*et dona ferentes.*

On the other hand, a straightforward examination of Mill's work seems to me to show that,

both for Mill himself and for the real meaning of his philosophy, these so-called inconsistencies are of no second-rate importance. They have, at all events, not less to do with his contribution to knowledge, in logic, ethics, and politics, than what are generally supposed to be his more deliberate and serious conclusions. To leave them out of account in criticising his work is to do him less than justice.

The suggestion of this aspect of his thought must not, of course, be understood to mean that Mill was an idealist. To affirm that he was so consciously would be to contradict what he has said about himself; nor can we regard his philosophy as, even unconsciously, idealistic. His very neglect of metaphysics is in itself inconsistent with a genuine or thorough idealism; and even apart from this, we could only make him out to be an idealist by ignoring elements which permeate his whole philosophical work. We find, indeed, many important utterances which are idealistic in spirit and temper, and which seem to constitute an abandonment of empiricism; but the general theory of thought and things is never recast so as to give effect

to these suggestions. His philosophy is certainly not idealism.

With all this, it remains true that the idealistic elements in Mill's thinking are really internal to his point of view, and that they are thus highly significant in the history of empiricism. They are not mere felonious appropriations of desired results produced by the labour of other men. They represent the effect in his own mind of new ways of thinking, to which he was singularly responsive, and by which he was profoundly influenced. If his idealism is "not in word, but in power"—if it appears not so much in definite logical utterance as in the point of view from which he regards the great human interests—it is not, on that account, less fruitful or less real. Its main importance, indeed, consists just in its having been developed within empiricism, and in the growth of positive sciences.

This element in Mill's thought is essentially ethical, both in its interest for him and in its actual development. His view of human activity and its worth is more idealistic than any other part of his philosophy. In his attitude towards his earlier masters, he is much more critical of

Bentham than of James Mill. He is, in fact, profoundly conscious of moral issues; and he finds their complexity to be too rich for the meagre explanation of them in which his predecessors had been satisfied. It is with the force of genuine conviction that he asserts the reality of voluntary choice, and its significance both as a means to human welfare and as the expression of personal life; while it is still more notable that he recognises the social character of moral criteria, that the internal sanctions of morality bulk largely in his mind, and that he is aware of the very limited extent to which the moral good of individuals is indicated by their subjective feelings.

It can hardly be denied that the latent idealism of such convictions implies a conception of man, in his relation to nature and to society, which Mill never worked out. But it is also true that his attempt to explain the legitimacy of his moral faiths, and still more the extent to which they affect his point of view in ethics and economics, produces a real and very considerable effect in his theory. If his view of man and nature is not such as to warrant his ideas of

morality, it is yet profoundly influenced by them, and all the more influenced because he thinks himself bound to find a basis in facts for his interpretation of the moral consciousness. Nor is there anything that need surprise us in this metaphysical effect of Mill's ethical idealism. If he had been more deliberately metaphysical, that idealism might have penetrated his doctrine still more profoundly. As it is, he gives no central or abiding effect to his idealistic tendencies in his explicit theory of thought and reality.

The very inconclusiveness and tentative character of Mill's philosophical work give it a peculiar educational usefulness. There is, indeed, hardly a more instructive, or, to use his favourite word, a more "fruitful" philosophical writer. But still greater than his importance in this respect is the value of the discipline which his intellectual attitude constantly affords. We find him always free, fair, candid, without pretence or fear; his point of view is singularly objective and impersonal; and his severe, delicate reserve and self-effacement make his work scientific in its manner no less than in its substance. His

very lack of a coherent system belongs to the sobriety of his thinking—to the serious thoroughness of his mental habit—to his unwillingness to fill up gaps in his knowledge by myths or guesses. These qualities give his writings an enduring usefulness and interest; and they secure for his convictions and his intellectual methods that influence upon the development of thought which more systematic speculations have sometimes failed to obtain: "men will long feel the presence of his character about them, making them ashamed of what is indolent or selfish, and encouraging them to all disinterested labour, both in trying to do good, and in trying to find out what the good is, —which is harder."[1] In this respect, at least, the study of Mill's philosophy brings its own reward. He gives new depth to the conviction that the disinterested pursuit of truth is possible and altogether worthy, and that the desire of "wisdom for life" still plays its own high part in human affairs.

In all this, too, and all the more readily because of his simplicity and candour — because of the freedom with which, on due occasion, he "gives

[1] Mr Morley's Critical Miscellanies, 2nd Series (1877), p. 250.

himself away"—one may learn much from the incompatibility of various elements in his thinking. A fuller and more concrete idea of human life, and specially of its moral and social aspect, forces itself through the individualism of his inheritance, and the empirical naturalism which is his normal point of view for mental and social facts. His examination of moral relations issues in a way of regarding them which is idealistic in principle, if not in actual result. But he never makes clear the connection of this aspect of his thought with his philosophy as a whole.

Our task, in studying his philosophical attempt, is that of disentangling, and relating to each other, mental tendencies which appear at first sight to be wholly inconsistent. We shall have to see how these ways of thinking impede and modify one another; how Mill's preconceptions are partly corrected by his half-conscious use of a more adequate logic; and how, in spite of this, these preconceptions, of which he is never wholly rid, foil his endeavours and vitiate his conclusions.

The lesson which his philosophy teaches, more

clearly perhaps than any other, is the difficulty of erecting a theory of knowledge and action on a basis of individualism; and the large transitions which we find in his way of thinking help us to estimate the interval that separates the philosophy and science of our day from those of the last generation.

CHAPTER II

ISOLATION

MILL'S whole speculative work is vitally affected by his theory of experience. Every philosophy derives its character largely from its doctrine of knowledge; and in modern systems of thought this element has become even more important than it was before, not only because knowledge itself is regarded with greater interest, but, still more, because all the problems of philosophy are looked at from a logical point of view. The relation of things to human personality and experience is, for modern philosophy, their principal characteristic; things are primarily objects of knowledge; and the way in which thought is regarded thus goes far to determine the conception of reality. The fact that logic

occupies this central position in philosophy is specially exemplified in Mill's writings; for there is no important part of his philosophical doctrine which is not rooted in the account that he gives of human knowledge, and all the elements in that account affect his theory in various ways. It is therefore expedient to begin the study of his philosophy by a survey of some of the more outstanding features of the conception of knowledge which underlies it.

The avowed basis of Mill's theory of knowledge is an assertion of the separateness of personal life from outward reality—a limitation of knowledge to the mental states of the individual; and this individualistic conception of thought, as a subjective process, isolated from the real world of objects, is of the greatest interest, both as a clue to Mill's philosophical parentage, and in respect of its significance for his whole idea of man's place in the world. While the general effect of his theory of personality is positive and objective, this affirmation of the limited and exclusive character of human subjectivity forms, as we shall see, a constant element in his philo-

sophy; and we must give an account of its main outlines.

This aspect of Mill's theory of knowledge is the result of a type of speculative system, and a phase of philosophical development, peculiarly English.

The philosophical activity of Locke and his successors is one of the main developments—and the development that possesses most historic interest—of the work of Descartes. It consists, both in intention and in execution, of a study of human knowledge, taken by itself, as a fact of observation; and it thus depends for the idea of its subject-matter on the distinction which Descartes had drawn between mind and matter —thinking substance and extended substance.

While Locke's work is based, in this way, upon the Cartesian result, it is no less determined, in respect of its method, by that sober view of human knowing-power which characterises all the great English thinkers. Nothing in his mental habit is more impressive than the seriousness and constancy of his endeavour to keep within the bounds of experience, and to limit what he has to say to the facts of mental life as they come

under observation. If he finds, even in his theory of knowledge, that the very nature of thought itself forces him to take account of realities as well as of ideas, and if he is thus entangled unwillingly in metaphysical problems he returns with all the greater eagerness to the safe regions of the "historical plain method."

The results of his study of knowledge show that the dualistic conception of reality — the recognition of separate extended and thinking substances—remains a settled fact for Locke, no less than it had been for Descartes. After analysis of things into ideas has gone to the furthest extent that Locke conceives possible, there remain certain qualities of extended or material existence that will not be resolved. Behind ideas lies the source from which they come—a substance of which we have no further knowledge than that which ideas yield us, and which is itself ultimately inaccessible to knowledge, because it cannot be resolved into ideas. The implicit definition of this "unknown somewhat" as material, or not mental, is the main object of Berkeley's attack upon Locke's theory.

Berkeley's polemical attitude towards Locke is

apt to produce a wrong impression of the relation between the two thinkers. One is liable to be misled, if one estimates a philosopher's differences from his predecessors at his own valuation; for the changes of method or of presuppositions which a thinker makes—in so far as they are deliberately or consciously made—can hardly fail to bulk disproportionately in his mind, or to occupy his attention more than the elements in his theory that are common to him with others. This is undeniably the case with Berkeley's relation to Locke. Berkeley is so keenly aware of the reform that he is making in philosophy, and of all its uses and consequences, that he hardly pauses to recognise the extent of his agreement with his predecessor, both in standpoint and method. One might thus easily be led to imagine a vastly greater difference between them than actually exists.

Berkeley's advance upon Locke's position was no doubt highly significant. Locke's acceptance of the Cartesian dualism left the metaphysical issues undecided and obscure; for however strongly the manner of his philosophy might tend to emphasise the mental aspect of all

reality, it did not preclude the possibility of an ultimate or metaphysical materialism, so long as certain qualities of matter, or even an "unknown somewhat," remained independent of conscious life. So far, indeed, as matter was positively conceived, it was reduced to dependence upon knowledge; but the admission of a non-spiritual residue, however indeterminately or negatively it might be thought of, was still a possible ground for the explanation of all reality in terms of this unknown quantity; and it was this possibility of a materialistic solution of the problem of dualism that was met by Berkeley's immaterialism. This immaterialism, however, was only the result of a consistent and deliberate use of Locke's method. Berkeley "had been accustomed by Locke, in the first place, to regard all that exists on its phenomenal or ideal side; and, at least in the 'secondary qualities' of matter, to regard *only* this ideal or phenomenal existence."[1] It was a direct application of this lesson, to reduce, as Berkeley did, all the qualities of matter, and material substance itself, to ideas—to make the existence of matter consist in the

[1] Professor Fraser's Berkeley (Philosophical Classics), p. 29.

possibility of its being perceived, and to regard it as derivative, or as relative to intelligence.

It is rather in his view of mind than of matter that Berkeley's originality lies. His negative criticism of the idea of "material substance," while it was his starting-point, did not constitute his whole philosophy: its interest for him was a derived one; and his motive, from the first, was his positive interest in the assertion of mind or spirit. The reduction of matter, and so of all existence, to dependence on mind, constitutes, in fact, a greater change in the idea of mind than in that of matter. For the idea of matter, such a reduction means only the impossibility of using it as the principle of metaphysical interpretation; but the idea of mind is more vitally and positively affected. So long as spirit is regarded as one of two mutually independent substances, it is necessarily limited; it explains, at most, only itself and the ideas in which reflection observes it. But spirit as the sole substance is the explanation, not only of its own phenomena, but of matter also, and of the relation of material to mental facts. It becomes the very principle of explanation; and facts are only understood when

they are seen in relation to it. Something of this sort is perhaps conveyed in Berkeley's own intimation that, while "ideas" constitute all our knowledge of matter, we have a "notion" of spirit.

But this positive view of spirit was not worked out by Berkeley; and Hume's interpretation of mind, as nothing but the series of ideas, was the natural sequel to Berkeley's criticism of Locke. However far it might be, in intention, from Berkeley's philosophy, this conception of mind resulted from an application to the idea of mental substance of the same method of criticism which Berkeley had applied to Locke's idea of matter. In his theory of mind Hume gave effect to Berkeley's method, and to his limitation of knowledge to ideas, at the expense of the "notion" of spirit.

The main significance of this formative period of English philosophy consists, undoubtedly, in its well-known historical relation to Kant—in the occasion which it gave for his "criticism" of experience. It led, in this way, to an assertion of the relativity of experience to a "subject"—of the necessity for a spiritual interpretation of reality — of the objective synthesis of judgment

against the mere subjectivity of "ideas" — of spirit as an active "subject" rather than a passive "substance." All this might seem, indeed, to be forecast by Berkeley's spiritualism.[1] But it was essentially inaccessible to him, no less than to Locke and Hume: it required a conception of mental life alien to their individualistic abstraction of knowledge from reality—of the subject from the object.

It is thus only natural that the work of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume should also have had historical results entirely different from the critical idealism of Kant. As a matter of fact, it is apt to be forgotten that the most direct—though not the most important—issue of their work was not its effect upon Kant, but its development by English thinkers, for whose speculations it continued to be a positive starting-point. John Stuart Mill is, in a sense, the last of these; and some important elements in his philosophy are inherited from them.

What took place, in the philosophical development which we have been considering, was the

[1] Cf. Professor Fraser's Preface to 'Siris,' Berkeley's Works (Clar. Press), vol. ii. pp. 347 ff.

determination of the psychological point of view. The progress of philosophy partly consists in the creation of sciences: it leads to the definition of points of view from which things are regarded, and so to the development of special sciences, which are theories of abstracted portions or aspects of reality. This is clearly instanced in the work of Locke, Berkeley, and Hume. At whatever rate we may estimate the differences between these thinkers, it is impossible to ignore the extent of their agreement; and that agreement consists primarily in their emphasis on the subjective aspect of things. However they may vary in the extent to which they consider explanation to be possible, they agree in thinking that the explanation of things consists in reducing them to "ideas," or states of consciousness. Their whole work is dominated by this conception. Theirs is the philosophy of ideas—a philosophy for which the abstract or unexplained subject is everything, and in which all reality tends to resolve itself into the passing states of the individual consciousness. Its final stage, indeed, is not reached till personal life is so resolved, and becomes, with Hume, only a name for the series

of ideas. But the tendency to this result, and even the necessity for it, is present from the beginning. It is bound up with the idea of explanation which directs the work of Locke no less than that of his successors. Philosophy has, for the time being, become psychology; and in this way the psychological standpoint is defined.

Psychology shares with all other special sciences the necessity for abstraction — for a limitation of attention to one part or aspect of existence. Such limitation is the condition of all specialisation of theory; and each science is defined by the form which its abstraction takes. In the case of psychology, the point of view adopted is inevitably subjective; the position of ideas in the subjective process is considered by it, to the exclusion of all other relations that they may have, in the complex of reality. Psychology is thus the science of Individual Mind. Its origin belongs to that deepened consciousness of personal isolation which characterises modern thought and life: it is the science of the isolated or abstracted individual.

The determination, however, of this psychological point of view was the outcome of an attempt

to solve philosophical rather than merely scientific problems. The abstraction from outward relations was not, in general, deliberately or consciously made for psychological purposes. The facts of consciousness were regarded as the sole clue to reality itself: the *abstract* subject was taken to be the whole of knowable existence. Such metaphysical use of abstract conceptions is an inevitable accompaniment of the growth of knowledge. It testifies, indeed, to the strength of the demand for metaphysic, that every science tends in this way to become metaphysical—that every aspect of experience, in turn, is taken for the whole, or made to explain the whole. The special metaphysical attempt, which we have been considering, was essentially psychological in its character; and it separated personal life from all other reality, because it made "ideas" the sole object of knowledge. It thus left the individual limited to himself, shorn of his relations to outward objects of knowledge and to other persons, bound hand and foot in the prison-house of his own subjectivity.

This individualism was Mill's philosophical starting-point. He inherited a theory of man's

relation to nature and society which came straight from the eighteenth century. The doctrine of man's natural separateness from the world of things and from other persons has seldom been accepted with less reserve than in the writings of Bentham and James Mill; and Mill learned it from them so thoroughly that he may be said never to have been able entirely to forget it. Even when he was most critical of his early teachers, he continued to regard himself as an exponent of the "experience philosophy"; and the groundwork of this philosophy, as he understood it, was the limitation of human knowledge to "states of consciousness."

It need not surprise us, then, to find, in Mill's theory of knowledge, elements that embody the individualism of the "theory of ideas." Mill is himself aware of the relation of his theory of knowledge to that of Berkeley, and to some extent of Hume. He recognises Berkeley's results as "the starting-point of the true analytic method of studying the human mind, of which they alone have rendered possible the subsequent developments;"[1] and he insists on the truth of Berkeley's concep-

[1] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. iv. p. 157.

tion of knowledge, although he finds it necessary to do so at the expense of the theological idealism to which Berkeley's philosophy was meant to lead.

Mill's individualism, however, is really an integral part of his philosophy: it is connected with the motive of his thinking no less vitally than with his inherited bias. The 'System of Logic' was intended to be a "text-book" of empiricism—of the doctrine "which derives all knowledge from experience, and all moral and intellectual qualities principally from the direction given to the associations;"[1] and Mill's interest in this theory of knowledge was mainly due to his conviction, that "the notion that truths external to the mind may be known by intuition or consciousness, independently of observation and experiment," is "in these times the great intellectual support of false doctrines and bad institutions."[1] But his intention of making experience the sole source of knowledge is carried out in his limitation of knowledge to the states of individual consciousness; and in this way his individualistic theory of knowledge is connected with his practical interests.

[1] Autobiography, p. 225.

This aspect of Mill's thought centres in his assertion that "of the outward world we know and can know absolutely nothing, except the sensations which we experience from it."[1] We can trace to this conception a whole system of ideas about knowledge, which play a most important part in Mill's philosophy. Once we take the view that "feeling and thought are much more real than anything else," and that "they are the only things which we directly know to be real,"[2] we are committed to a theory of knowledge. It follows inevitably that "the whole variety of the facts of nature as we know it is given in the mere existence of our sensations, and in the laws or order of their occurrence;"[3] and that "every objective fact is grounded on a corresponding subjective one,"[4] and is merely "a name for the unknown and inscrutable process by which that subjective or psychological fact is brought to pass."[5]

This conception of all reality, beyond subjective states, as merely matter of inference, applies both

[1] Logic, p. 39. [2] Essays on Religion, p. 202.
[3] Examination of Hamilton, p. 257.
[4] Logic, p. 49. [5] Ibid.

to material and to mental facts. A body is simply "the external cause to which we ascribe our sensations";[1] and "the thinking principle, or mind, in my own nature, makes itself known to me only by the feelings of which it is conscious."[2] Of the inferential character of our knowledge of outward reality, Mill speaks confidently. He even goes so far as to suggest that "we have in all probability no notion of not-self, until after considerable experience of the recurrence of sensations according to fixed laws, and in groups."[3] Knowledge begins, in fact, with simple unreferred sensations; and the consciousness of a real world, the reference of sensations to outward objects, is a later stage in its development. Things are merely the causes of our ideas; and we gradually come to infer their existence from the presence of their effects. This is no less true of the relations between the elements of our experience than of these elements themselves. The relations are themselves simply feelings. "Resemblance is nothing but our feeling of resemblance; succession is nothing but our feeling of

[1] Logic, p. 36. [2] Ibid., p. 40.
[3] Examination of Hamilton, p. 265.

succession."[1] Relations are feelings that are produced by the relation between feelings. No less than simple sensations, they are effects upon us of the order of things—an order which we do not directly know, but which produces knowledge in us, and whose reality we are able to infer, although Mill does not explain how the inference comes about, or how knowledge is produced by that which has no objective character. On the whole, as Mill says plainly, "the distinction which we verbally make between the properties of things and the sensations we receive from them, must originate in the convenience of discourse rather than in the nature of what is signified by the terms."[2]

It might be suggested that this particular "convenience of discourse" is in itself a highly significant fact: the objectification, which is required for coherent speech, might reasonably be regarded as more than an accidental excrescence upon knowlege. It is at all events proper that we should examine the validity of a way of thinking which leads to such practical difficulties —difficulties which are not accidental, but which

[1] Logic, p. 47. [2] Ibid., p. 41.

belong inseparably to the attempt to make states of consciousness our ultimate term of explanation.

There are undeniable grounds for making the personal life of the thinking subject our clue to reality. All thought is in the life and development of individual minds: subjective states are the only appropriations of the objective world that can constitute knowledge. But it is none the less misleading to regard objective reality as explained by reducing it to ideas; for the very conception of "ideas" abstracts from their relation to the objective world, and "ideas," in this abstraction, are not knowledge. Knowledge consists, not in ideas *per se*, but in ideas synthesised by and organised into a subject, in which alone they have being and permanence. It is not, in fact, the self taken in abstraction, but the self as it exists in the knowing synthesis, that can be made a term of explanation. To speak of "ideas" or "states of consciousness," however, is to abstract the self from the synthesis of knowledge; and, while this abstraction may be proper to the psychological point of view, it yields a conception of the "self" which is metaphysically useless.

Further criticism of Mill's individualism must be postponed until we come to speak of his own correction of it. It is to be observed, meanwhile, that this view of knowledge really enters into his conception of man's place in the world. He thinks of knowledge and conduct as effects of merely outward reality; and this deterministic empiricism—this idea of thought and action as products of a world which is wholly external—is rooted in the individualism that makes reality not the object but the cause of knowledge, and so subordinates personal life to an order with which it stands in no internal or vital relation. Apart from this individualistic assumption, the view of human life as a causally connected unity, and even as rooted in the natural order, would not lead to that empirical conception of it, as the passive creature of circumstances, which Mill sometimes adopts.

The effect of Mill's individualism on his general view of human life shows his inability to escape from it; and we find further evidence of this in his logical theory. His conception of Logic itself commits him to an abstract or subjective treatment of it. To affirm that "so far as it is

a science at all, it is a part or branch of Psychology," and that "its theoretic grounds are wholly borrowed from Psychology,"[1] is to make Logic a science of "mental states"; and this view, which is an obvious sequel to the idea that the objects of knowledge are "in other words" states of consciousness,[2] evidences itself only too freely in Mill's treatment of logical questions.

The theory of judgment which regards it as a coupling of two mental states is a decisive and important instance of the attempt to interpret knowledge psychologically; and this, while it is not Mill's general or leading view, is yet explicitly stated by him, and is by no means without effect in his logical theory. It follows naturally from the treatment of "ideas" in the earlier part of the 'Logic';[3] and it has considerable influence on the subsequent discussion.

This theory of judgment connects itself with the conception of causality which Mill inherited from Hume—the conception which regards it as

[1] Examination of Hamilton, p. 461.

[2] Logic, p. 64.

[3] Cf. Logic, bk. i. c. iii.

merely subjective. We need not pause here to discuss the consistency of this doctrine with the place which Mill assigns to causality in his treatment of Induction. The view of the causal relation as simply a mental sequence obviously belongs to that same mode of thought which regards predication as mere coupling of mental states. From the point of view of psychology, causality *is* nothing more than this sequence of ideas, which constitutes a habit of expecting what we call the effect when we find the cause; and Mill's aversion to that idea of a "mystical tie"[1] or "mysterious compulsion,"[2] which seems to him to vitiate other theories of causality, leaves him with a view of the causal relation which gives effect to his individualist leanings—a view which results in the completest possible dissociation of the factors in the relation, and falls in with his conception of knowledge as a coupling of isolated ideas. It need not surprise us that this theory of judgment and of the causal relation modifies his idea of definition and inference.

Whatever view is taken of judgment must affect the idea of definition; for the scope of def-

[1] Logic, p. 548. [2] Examination of Hamilton, p. 603.

inition is at all events limited by that of judgment, since we always define by judging. Mill asserts that definition is purely verbal—"a mere identical proposition which gives information only about the use of language."[1] He takes all definition—apart from a postulate which might give it objective significance—to be merely a declaration of the meaning of a word. Now, the relation of this to the psychological theory of judgment and causality is evident. If judgment be a coupling of ideas, then the ideas that a *defining* judgment couples are those of a name and an interpretation of it. If, on the other hand, we regard judgment as a statement of the objective reality of a relation, then definition also will be a statement about reality: it will be a statement of the determining qualities of a thing. While definition is always a hypothetical judgment, it may still, on this view, be a hypothetical judgment about reality; and it can only be regarded as essentially verbal on the ground that judgment itself has no objective reference.

Nominalism is, in fact, a normal element in a sensationalist theory of knowledge; and there is

[1] Logic, p. 94.

nothing mysterious about the persistent connection between these tendencies of thought. In so far as we limit knowledge to sensations, we are compelled to regard judgments as concerned merely with ideas; for if knowledge be not essentially a synthesis, then its real objects are bare and unrelated particulars, and the connections between them are nominal and unreal. Mill's contention that definition is merely verbal, results naturally from his tendency to regard judgment as a coupling of mental states, and to make isolated and unreferred sensations the object of knowledge.

His theory of inference bears traces of the same origin. He regards syllogism as a mere mode of statement, and not a form of proof; and this view of it depends on his conception of the elements from which knowledge is built up. If these elements are isolated states of consciousness, and therefore mere particulars, then it is no doubt true that the major premise of a syllogism, being simply a general statement about all such particulars, can never prove anything. But if the objects of our knowledge are regarded as realities capable of analysis, then a general state-

ment, which takes to do with their common element and abstracts from their differences, may have a value, as a means of proof, greater than that of all the unanalysed instances, on which it is nevertheless analytically founded. Mill's denial of the validity of syllogistic proof really suggests that the truth of argument depends upon its content, and that its general form can prove nothing; but he fails to give effect to this suggestion because he conceives the content of judgment in such a way that it cannot be a ground of proof. To affirm that "the syllogism is not a correct analysis"[1] of the process of reasoning, because that process is always "an inference from particulars to particulars," is to assume that the particulars in question contain no universal element; and Mill does assume this, in so far as he identifies the object of knowledge with isolated sensations.

That the psychological view of knowledge serves in part to determine Mill's theory of inference, is also shown, if further proof be needed, by his identification of the logical theory of reasoning with the psychological explanation

[1] Logic, p. 128.

by association of ideas,[1] and by his interpretation of logical inference as a "habit of expecting that what has been found true once or several times, and never yet found false, will be found true again."[2] Whatever validity such explanations may possess as statements of the psychology of reasoning, to make them the basis of logical theories is to regard logic as the science of the subjective process; and the propriety of this depends on that theory of explanation which makes it consist in reduction to "ideas."

It appears, then, that that conception of the knowing subject which isolates it from all other reality plays no small part in Mill's Logic, affecting, as it does, his idea of definition and inference, as well as of the character and problem of logical science itself.

[1] Logic, p. 428. [2] Ibid., p. 204.

CHAPTER III

EXPERIENCE

While Mill's logic contains elements that are due to the individualistic, or psychological, point of view from which he sometimes regards thought, these elements do not constitute his whole theory of knowledge. His individualism has, indeed, a real effect on his logical doctrine: his theories of definition and inference are influenced by his limitation of knowledge to states of consciousness. But he also entertains an entirely different, and even opposite, conception of knowledge; and this conception is the basis of his most distinctive and valuable work as a logician.

The ground of this less abstract idea of experience is to be found in Mill's consciousness of the direct relation of thought to the rest of reality—a consciousness which is expressed primarily in

a denial of the unqualified or absolute isolation of mental life. He affirms his conviction that "the conceptions, which we employ for the colligation and methodisation of facts, do not develop themselves from within, but are impressed upon the mind from without; they are never obtained otherwise than by way of comparison and abstraction, and, in the most important and the most numerous cases, are evolved by abstraction from the very phenomena which it is their office to colligate."[1] He insists that "the conception is not furnished *by* the mind until it has been furnished *to* the mind."[2] He regards the feeling of certainty and the necessity that sometimes belongs to our judgments as due to the impress of reality upon our mental life, and to the degree in which our mental habits are fashioned by the course of things.[3] He makes experience so direct a rendering of reality that it is "its own test";[4] and he studies the principles that should regulate its growth, by inspection of its actual course of development.[5]

[1] Logic, p. 427. [2] Ibid., p. 428.
[3] Examination of Hamilton, p. 328.
[4] Logic, p. 209. [5] Ibid., p. 545.

One of the most important instances of this way of thinking is the account which Mill gives of those axioms that lie at the root of knowledge.

He holds that "unless we knew something immediately, we could not know anything mediately, and consequently could not know anything at all;"[1] and he investigates axioms with a distinct consciousness that the account given of them determines the mode in which experience itself is to be conceived. Knowledge depends upon recognition of these axioms, the truth of which is self-evident and immediately known. If they are known *a priori*, then experience contains actual elements which are not empirical in their origin. Mill declares against this view. Axioms, he says, "are experimental truths; generalisations from observation;"[2] and this is not only true of the axioms on which mathematical science depends; those postulates which lie at the root of all knowledge of nature are no less empirical in their origin. "The law of Causation, the recognition of which is the main pillar of inductive science, is but the familiar truth, that invariability of succession is found by ob-

[1] Examination of Hamilton, p. 157. [2] Logic, p. 151.

servation to obtain between every fact in nature and some other fact which has preceded it."[1] It is, in fact, "such a notion as can be gained from experience."[1]

In the same way, an experiential origin is claimed for the idea of the Uniformity of Nature. "It would . . . be a great error to offer this large generalisation as any explanation of the inductive process. On the contrary, I hold it to be itself an instance of induction, and induction by no means of the most obvious kind."[2] The conception of experience which this view of axioms yields is very obvious. From its simplest beginnings to its largest and most general results, experience is the product in man of the order of things in which he lives. That order is reproduced in him; his thought depends upon and follows it.

Now, while this way of thinking is in the highest degree significant, as a correction of that individualistic limitation of thought to itself which is an element in Mill's theory of knowledge, it must, at the same time, be recognised that such a statement of the relation of thought

[1] Logic, p. 213. [2] Ibid., p. 201.

to reality is equivocal and even misleading. It may mean nothing better than the deterministic empiricism that makes thought the mere creature of a reality conceived as foreign to it; it may subject intelligence to things, in such a way as to render a science of Logic fatuous and impossible; and Mill does actually tend to conceive knowledge in this way. In his zeal for experience, and for the direct relation of thought to things, he barely escapes, if indeed he does escape, the reduction of knowledge to a merely passive process.

On the other hand, it is happily not needful to put such a construction on Mill's theory of experience. That theory may be combined with an idea of Nature which does full justice to the distinctive character of knowledge. If we take such a view of the activity of the thinking subject as is sometimes explicitly stated,[1] and very generally implied, by Mill himself, the assertion of the dependence of every element in knowledge upon experience is no more than every sane philosophy admits. Any kind of "Idealism" which

[1] Examination of Hamilton, pp. 258 ff.: Dissertations and Discussions, vol. iii. pp. 120 ff.

lives by clinging to those conceptions for which no experiential basis can yet be found, must have an increasingly precarious existence; and even Mill's strongest assertions of the dependence upon experienced fact of all conceptions and axioms leave undisputed the dependence of experience itself upon activity. Such assertions form, indeed, no small contribution to the development of a theory of knowledge. They make thought in the fullest sense objective; so that things may be said to think in us, and knowledge is the coming to consciousness of reality itself.

This interpretation of Mill's experientialism is not one which requires to be discovered or invented in his defence. It is only a statement of the significance which his theory of knowledge actually has for him. Objectivity is characteristic of Mill's whole treatment of logic. He regards it as "common ground on which the partisans of Hartley and of Reid, of Locke and of Kant, may meet and join hands";[1] and he does so because he thinks of it as a science of Evidence, the object of which is to investigate

[1] Logic, p. 8.

the nature of proof, and which is therefore not directly concerned in metaphysical or psychological differences. This view of logic as an objective science of evidence distinguishes Mill sharply from Comte. Comte made logic a science of discovery, the object of which was to find how the craving for clear and coherent conceptions could be satisfied: he did not investigate the methods of verification and proof. Mill's logic, on the other hand, is, above all, a study of the conditions of proof—of the mode in which the real causes of phenomena can be found and verified.[1] He regards truth as an objective standard, by which every one means the same thing—"agreement of a belief with the fact which it purports to represent"[2]—and he makes this the basis of logic. "If the operation of forming a judgment or a proposition includes anything at all, it includes judging that the judgment or the proposition is true. The recognition of it as true is not only an essential part but the essential element of it as a judgment; leave that out, and there

[1] Cf. Höffding, 'Einleitung in die Englische Philosophie unserer Zeit' (German trans.), p. 32.

[2] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. iii. p. 357.

remains a mere play of thought in which no judgment is passed." [1] Logic is thus "the science of the conditions on which right concepts, judgments, and reasonings depend." [2] It is not merely the science of formal accuracy or consistency in thinking; for "it is only as a means to material truth that the formal, or, to speak more clearly, the conditional, validity of an operation of thought is of any value." [3] Logic "is the art of thinking, of all thinking, and of nothing but thinking." [4]

This assertion of the objective and normative character which belongs to logic as a science, and of the idea of truth as the determining idea of all logical investigation, gives the science a position entirely different from that of a mere branch of psychology. Mill adopts a new conception of logic, at the outset of his discussion of the "Import of Propositions," when he says that it "has no concern with the nature of the act of judging or believing; the consideration of that act, as a phenomenon of the mind, belongs to another science." [5]

[1] Examination of Hamilton, p. 421. [2] Ibid., p. 464.
[3] Ibid., p. 476. [4] Ibid., p. 462. [5] Logic, p. 55.

Such a conception of logic is hardly consistent with the Humian phenomenalism of Mill's theory of knowledge; it depends rather upon the assumption that the object of knowledge is a real world distinct from the subjective mental processes of the individual. This is an assumption which Mill may have learned from Reid, and of which he seems to be so unconscious that he does not see any necessity for vindicating it. He suggests, indeed, that "if the only real object of thought, even when we are nominally speaking of Noumena, are Phenomena, our thoughts are true when they are made to correspond with Phenomena."[1] The world of Phenomena seems to form, in this suggestion, a sort of *tertium quid* between thoughts and things. In any case "Phenomena" are sharply enough distinguished from "thoughts": the object of knowledge is regarded as other than states of consciousness. Mill does not escape the antithesis of thought and its object any more than Locke or Kant;[2] and, when he comes to discuss the problems of logic in detail, he finds

[1] Examination of Hamilton, p. 495.

[2] Cf. Professor Andrew Seth's article "Epistemology in Locke and Kant," Philosophical Review, vol. ii. p. 167.

the objective reference of thought to be the aspect of it which requires most emphasis and consideration. The serious and constructive part of his logic is rooted in his demand for proof and verification; and it thus depends on the consciousness of a real world of knowable objects.

This conception of knowledge is not only implicitly conveyed in Mill's logical discussions: it is also expressly stated and argued for. He abandons and criticises the representation of knowledge as an aggregate of unreferred ideas, and recognises that it depends on a consciousness, on the one hand, of the real world, and, on the other hand, of the self. These, he says, in speaking of developed knowledge, "represent two things with both of which the sensation of the moment, be it what it may, stands in relation, and I cannot be conscious of the sensation without being conscious of it as related to these two things."[1]

Mill seems, indeed, to forget much of his own preceding discussion of the "things denoted by Names,"[2] when he says of the theory of knowledge, by which that discussion is really domin-

[1] Examination of Hamilton, p. 266. [2] Logic, bk. i. c. iii.

ated, "the notion that what is of primary importance to the logician, in a proposition, is the relation between the two *ideas* corresponding to the subject and predicate (instead of the relation between the two *phenomena* which they respectively express), seems to me one of the most fatal errors ever introduced into the philosophy of logic."[1] But this sweeping statement does not stand alone. It forms part of a discussion of the "Import of Propositions," in which the implication in all judgment of an objective reference is asserted again and again, unhesitatingly and deliberately. Propositions "are not assertions respecting our ideas of things, but assertions respecting the things themselves."[2] An integral part, too, of Mill's criticism of Hamilton's Logic is expressed in his desire to hear "less about Concepts and more about Things, less about Forms of Thought and more about grounds of Knowledge."[3] He insists, against the subjective or formal conception of logic, that "the judgment is not a recognition of a relation between concepts, but of a succession, a coexistence, or a similitude, between

[1] Logic, p. 57. [2] Ibid., pp. 56 ff.
[3] Examination of Hamilton, p. 622.

facts,"[1] and that "judgment is concerning the fact, not the concept";[2] and he adduces Hamilton's own contention that new truths are discovered by reasoning, to disprove his assertion "that reasoning is the comparison of two notions through the medium of a third.[3]

It cannot be doubted that this, which has now been stated, is Mill's real view of knowledge. It is the conception that underlies his interest in Induction, and in the actual scientific procedure, upon which his theory of Induction is based; and it is the conception to which his assertion of the empirical character of all knowledge leads naturally and almost inevitably. Mill's acceptance of this objective theory of logic is so frank and so thorough that he says, of logical laws, that "since they are laws of all phenomena, and since Existence has to us no meaning but one which has relation to Phenomena, we are quite safe in looking upon them as laws of Existence."[4] Such an utterance as this is conceived, indeed, in the spirit of the same resolute empiricism which prompts Mill's limitation of knowledge to the

[1] Examination of Hamilton, p. 426.
[2] Ibid., p. 421.
[3] Ibid., p. 445.
[4] Ibid., p. 492.

subjective process, and makes him regard logic as a branch of psychology—*sed quantum mutatus ab illo.*

Within the limits of the "experience philosophy," Mill's limitation of knowledge to mental states has given place to a conception of it which makes it an apprehension of the fulness of concrete reality. His consciousness of the objectivity of knowledge is grown so definite that it leads him to regard logic as a science not of abstract or subjective thought but of existence. Logic becomes, on such a view of it, the science of certain ultimate relations of things. The existence of these relations may indeed be dependent on the relativity of all being to thought; but they belong none the less but all the more on that account to the constitution of reality, and are not merely subjective modifications of conscious life. At such a point as this Mill is much more nearly idealistic than he can be said to be in that subjectivist phenomenalism which is sometimes, strangely enough, regarded as an idealistic element in his thinking.[1]

It connects itself with this assertion of the objective validity of logical laws, and still more

[1] Cf. Mr Courtney's Metaphysics of J. S. Mill, p. 35.

directly with the idea of logic as a science of truth, that Mill makes judgment the unit of logical theory.[1] As he says himself, "The answer to every question, which it is possible to frame, must be contained in a Proposition, or Assertion. Whatever can be an object of belief, or even of disbelief, must, when put into words, assume the form of a proposition. All truth and all error lie in propositions. What, by a convenient misapplication of an abstract term, we call a Truth, is simply a True Proposition; and errors are false propositions."[2] Judgment is, in fact, the simplest possible form of objective thought: apart from it, there is no belief and no knowledge. Reference to reality exists only in judgment: if it appears to belong to concepts, it belongs to them simply in virtue of the judgments by which they have been constructed.[3] But since objective reference and the possibility of truth are thus present for the first time in judgment, it is with judgment that we have to do in logic. "Logic does not undertake to analyse mental facts into their ultimate ele-

[1] Cf. Mr Bradley's Principles of Logic, book i. c. i.

[2] Logic, p. 12. [3] Examination of Hamilton, pp. 419, 420.

ments."[1] It does not investigate the mode in which knowledge originates historically. It is the science of the objective reference or the validity of knowledge; and so it has to consider judgments and not concepts. Its starting-point is in the judgment, since it has to do, not with the existence, but solely with the use of concepts.[2] Concepts have no meaning for it, as they have none for knowledge, otherwise than in the objective synthesis of judgment. In his discussion of judgment, Mill is so free from the influence of epistemological individualism that he denies the very existence of concepts. He regards the concept as a mere abstraction, made for the purpose of judgment. It has "merely a fictitious or constructive existence,"[3] and is differentiated from the rest of the mental complex, to which it actually belongs, only by "a special share of attention guaranteed to it by special association with a name."[3] This fictitious or constructive character of the concept makes it an impossible basis or starting-point for logic.[3]

[1] Logic, p. 66.

[2] Cf. Mr Bradley's Principles of Logic, book i. c. i.

[3] Examination of Hamilton, p. 402.

Mill's suggestion, that it would be better to say that we think by means of general names than by means of concepts,[1] is a remarkable instance of his tendency to nominalism. It affords, however, a less useful and less consistent correction of the formal conception of logic than his own statement and assumption that logic has to do only with judgment, and that neither ideas nor things have any place in knowledge otherwise than in the synthesis of judgment. Mill is only carrying this view a stage further when he suggests, in explanation of the importance of hypothetical propositions, "that what they predicate of a proposition, namely, its being an inference from something else, is precisely that one of its attributes with which most of all a logician is concerned."[2] Logic is, in fact, primarily a science of inference or proof; and the inferential relations of judgments are those with which it takes to do. What is relevant for the logician is the way in which a proposition "may be made available for advancing from it to other propositions."[3] On the other hand,

[1] Examination of Hamilton, p. 403.

[2] Logic, p. 54. [3] Ibid., p. 76.

judgments are in themselves real; they constitute knowledge; and they are capable of truth and falsehood. It is thus at once possible and necessary for logic to find its starting-point in them.

This conception of logic as the science of judgment and reasoning is so central to Mill's theory, that his view of the meaning of general names is partly determined by the necessities of judgment. "Propositions and Reasonings," he says, "may be written in extension but they are always understood in Comprehension;"[1] "all judgments, expressed by means of general terms, are judgments in comprehension."[2] In the proposition, *e.g.*, "The summit of Chimborazo is white," "the meaning of the proposition . . . is that the individual thing denoted by the subject has the attributes connoted by the predicate."[3] This is the view which is required in order to make reasoning intelligible;[4] and the fact that judgment and reasoning are only explicable on the understanding that the meaning of general names is fixed by their connotation, has probably much to do with Mill's acceptance of that theory.

[1] Examination of Hamilton, p. 437.
[2] Ibid., p. 501.
[3] Logic, p. 62.
[4] Ibid., p. 75.

This view of the meaning of general names—that it "resides in the connotation"[1]—is one which Mill consistently and unhesitatingly maintains, in opposition to the theory that the extension or denotation of names is their meaning. "In predicating the name," he says, "we predicate only the attributes; and the fact of belonging to a class does not, in many cases, come into view at all."[2]

Now this assertion that "attributes" are the subject-matter of judgment and reasoning, raises an important issue for Mill's theory of knowledge, an issue which is significant in connection with his refusal to regard the distinction between sensations and properties of things as anything more than a "convenience of discourse."[3]

Abstinence from a distinction between sensations and qualities of things is, of course, apt to be a one-sided bargain, since it is very generally equivalent to a reduction of the objective world to states of consciousness. But Mill's assertion of the objective reference of knowledge leads us to expect a recognition of attributes or

[1] Logic, p. 59. [2] Ibid., p. 76. [3] Cf. chap. ii.

qualities of things as other than mere mental states; and such an expectation does not remain wholly unfulfilled. Mill's account of judgment, as an ascription of attributes to reality, contains a view of attributes which is not really consistent with their identification with states of individual consciousness. He does not, indeed, expressly qualify his denial of the distinction in question. But, on the one hand, he distinguishes sharply between objects, or phenomena, and the ideas of them; while, on the other hand, he connects the idea of phenomena, characterised by attributes, with that of an order of nature. It remains possible, of course, still to maintain that these phenomena, and nature itself, cannot be distinguished from feelings or subjective states. But such a refusal to recognise an objective order of things would render Mill's brave words about the objective reference of judgment wholly idle and unmeaning. Why should we take pains to insist that judgment is about things, and not about ideas, if, all the while, there is no real ground for distinguishing things from ideas at all?

That Mill recognised the attributes of things,

as belonging to the real world, is borne out by his actual use of them: the idea that they are not mere mental states, but determinations of objective reality, evidences itself in his theory of classification. He recognises the legitimacy of various subjective modes of classification, which are "all good, for the purposes of their own particular departments of knowledge or practice."[1] But he insists, none the less, on the reality of "natural groups," whose individual members are bound together by the common possession of certain characters. Now such "natural groups" "are constituted in contemplation of, and by reason of, characters."[2] Their resemblance—their agreement in certain attributes or characters—forms the ground of the relation between the individuals which constitute the group. "The kind, to us, *is* the set of properties by which it is identified."[3]

Attributes or qualities of things thus form the basis of objective classification—of the classification of things according to their own nature. Such classification is not, indeed, determined by "resemblance to a type," but only by the presence of

[1] Logic, p. 468. [2] Ibid., p. 472. [3] Ibid., p. 379.

characters which serve to differentiate things which possess them from things which do not. Still the idea of classification according to Natural Kinds implies a system of objective natural relations. It involves the existence of classes which are "distinguished from all other classes by an indeterminate multitude of properties not derivable from one another,"[1] and between which, consequently, "there is an impassable barrier."[2] The problem of fixing the conception of a kind is "to find a few definite characters, which point to the multitude of indefinite ones."[2] Kinds are thus constituted by a standard, reference to which determines whether objects belong to them or not;[3] and Mill recognises that such kinds—classes of phenomena bound together by relation to an intellectual standard — are objectively present in nature.

The theory of kinds, we learn from Mill, was added to the Logic "suggested by otherwise inextricable difficulties";[4] and that it originates, in this way, in the necessities of his treatment of

[1] Logic, p. 81. [2] Ibid., p. 471.

[3] Cf. Mr Bosanquet's Logic, vol. i. pp. 125 ff.

[4] Autobiography, p. 181.

induction, is a significant fact. In itself, however, the theory is, in the highest degree, important. Such a conception as it implies, of the intelligibility of nature—of the degree in which reality expresses and embodies principles that are not alien to our reason—is a suggestive element in Mill's Logic. It conveys the idea of nature as a rational system; and this constitutes the logical significance of Mill's contention that natural or objective classifications, no less than those which are devised in various subjective interests, are based upon characters of things. Since these characters are simply attributes or qualities, and since they are, at the same time, the ground of an objective or natural classification of things, attributes come to have in this connection the objective significance which belongs to them in Mill's theory of judgment, but which is not made clear in his discussion of attributes themselves.

CHAPTER IV

CAUSALITY

MILL'S assertion of the existence of Natural Kinds — his belief in an objective method of classification—implies a conception of nature, as an objective system, which goes far to correct his phenomenalist theory of knowledge; and this conception is specially inconsistent with the psychological doctrine of causality which he sometimes affirms. Mill inherited from Hume that idea of the causal relation which makes it simply a subjective habit of expectation, induced by frequent repetition of a sequence of mental states; and he does not openly abandon this way of regarding causality. But the conception of nature, as a system of objective things, whose attributes determine one another, has no vital connection with this purely psychological account

of the relation of cause and effect; and it need not surprise us if we find, in Mill's explicit doctrine of causality, elements which are not consistent with that mode of conceiving the relation which he derived from Hume.

Such elements are not far to seek. Even when Mill makes consciousness of change the motive of the search for causes,[1] he does so in a spirit akin to that rather of Lotze than of Hume. What seems to him to need explanation is the "changeable element," which is recognised to be "in phenomena";[2] and the idea of the causal relation, as one which belongs objectively to things as we know them, is still more definitely suggested in the statement that "the cause . . . is the sum-total of the conditions, positive and negative, taken together."[3] Such an account of causation presents the idea of known reality as a single developing process, whose later stages grow out of its earlier, and in which various elements conspire to produce each new manifestation of its nature. But this is a way of thinking for which the relations that characterise

[1] Examination of Hamilton, pp. 366, 367.

[2] Ibid., p. 367. [3] Logic, p. 217.

reality in our knowledge are, virtually at all events, even if not explicitly, objects of constructive thought, rather than mere states of subjective feeling. If we make nature a system of things, then causality becomes merely the most abstract way of conceiving their systematic or rational connection.

The same tendency shows itself in Mill's assertion that, in the investigation of causes, "the Plurality of Causes is the only reason why mere number is of any importance."[1] The causal relation is not constituted by the mere frequency of any particular sequence: it is in the nature and not the constancy of the sequence that it really consists; and the demonstrative use of a number of instances depends merely on the fact that they furnish a rough substitute for analysis of the phenomena.

These elements in Mill's theory of causality convey the idea that the causal relation is not a mere habit of expectation, but an objective determination of things. But this idea of causality is most definitely expressed by Mill in his statement that the causal relation is distinguished from

[1] Logic, p. 287.

the relation of mere sequence by being unconditional. "Invariable sequence, therefore, is not synonymous with causation, unless the sequence, besides being invariable, is unconditional."[1] It is to express this unconditional relation that the words "cause" and "effect" are required; and Mill criticises Comte's refusal to use these words mainly on the ground that this refusal indicates the absence of an idea of unconditional relation.[2]

The significance of such an interpretation of causality can hardly be overstated. It means, for Mill himself, that the causal relation is a necessary one;[3] and this conception of the relation is a real departure from Mill's own assertion of the absence of "necessity" from the action of causes.[4] That assertion, however, is the inevitable issue of the reduction of the causal relation to a habit of expectation, or a mere sequence of ideas; for if the causal relation is unconditional, it is not any kind of subjective sequence. Mill's statement that causality is a necessary relation is thus decisive for his account of it.

[1] Logic, p. 222.

[2] Auguste Comte and Positivism, pp. 57-59.

[3] Logic, p. 222.

[4] Ibid., p. 548.

This conception of causality as an unconditional relation of things is Mill's most positive idea on the subject; although he does not clear it of certain confusions, which are bound up with the theory that serial order is the essence of the causal relation—that sequence is its primary characteristic. His tendency, for example, to separate "uniformities of coexistence" from the principle of causality,[1] may be traced to the presupposition that the causal relation is essentially serial—that it is a relation involving temporal sequence in its terms, and that an interval of time elapses, as it were, between the cause and the effect. Now, such a view is really a return to the psychological conception of causality; and it must, in the long-run, bring about a reduction of causality to mere change or sequence, and a failure to conceive it as the principle involved alike in change and in permanence. But that "unconditional" relation, in which Mill finds the essence of causality, involves the unity of cause and effect. If, as he says, the cause "is the sum-total of the conditions positive and negative taken together,"[2] then the cause

[1] Logic, pp. 381 ff. [2] Ibid., p. 217.

cannot be present without the effect; for "the sum-total of the conditions" constitutes the very presence of the effect itself. Mill tries to make the idea of causality, conceived as mere sequence, do duty for that of the whole system of categories, which all relation may be said to imply, but to which even the fullest and most concrete interpretation of causality is not adequate. The abandonment, however, of the view that the causal relation is essentially serial is really implied in regarding it as unconditional. Now the idea of the causal relation as unconditional —as a unity—is that which Mill actually makes use of; and it is his use of the idea as the ground of induction that must decide his interpretation of it, since his interest in it is purely logical, and he considers it simply as a principle of knowledge or explanation relative to experience.

Causality is, for Mill, the ground of all induction. He suggests that "M. Comte's determined abstinence from the word and the idea of Cause had much to do with his inability to conceive an Inductive Logic, by diverting his attention from the only basis upon which it could be

founded;"[1] and his own discussion of the Inductive Methods rests consistently upon the view, which he announces, that "the validity of all the Inductive Methods depends on the assumption that every event, or the beginning of every phenomenon, must have some cause, some antecedent, on the existence of which it is invariably and unconditionally consequent."[2] It is to be observed that, even in this statement, Mill continues to speak of causality as if it were a principle regulating change and change only. In so far as he does so, he deprives the causal relation of that unconditional character which makes it the basis of induction. It is no doubt true that there are many uniformities of coexistence which we are unable to trace to causal conditions; and our knowledge of such uniformities is, as Mill suggests, merely empirical;[3] for an inductive knowledge of things only exists in so far as we trace them to their conditions. But the suggestion of uniformities of coexistence for which no real conditions exist implies a co-ordinate

[1] Auguste Comte and Positivism, p. 59.

[2] Logic, p. 369.

[3] Cf. Logic, book iii. chap. xxii.

possibility of unconditioned events; and the attempt to limit the law of causality, or unconditional relation, to successions of events must inevitably issue in its complete abrogation. Causality, in the sense in which it is the ground of inductive reasoning, and of guaranteed knowledge, is simply the most abstract unconditional relation. The cause is the ground or explanation of the effect;[1] and it is in this sense that the law of causation is the *prius* of Inductive reasoning. Induction goes on the supposition that everything is completely caused, or is ideally capable of being presented as an effect or product of conditions.

Stated in this way, the law of causation becomes equivalent to the principle of the Uniformity, or, more correctly, the Unity, of Nature, in the sense in which that principle is "the fundamental principle, or general axiom, of Induction,"[2] and must "be regarded as our warrant for all the others." It is to be observed that this principle, taken in the sense in which it is the *prius* of Induction, is not really the

[1] Cf. Mr Bosanquet's Logic, vol. i. pp. 264 ff.

[2] Logic, p. 201.

result of Induction at all. When Mill suggests in one sentence that the Uniformity of Nature is a result arrived at by complex and developed Induction, and in the next that every Induction really assumes this principle, he takes the principle in different senses. Our developed idea of Nature, as a uniform whole, is certainly the result of reflection upon experience. But experience itself, in the only sense in which it is a source of knowledge, consists in a consciousness of objective relations, which implies the real unity of known reality.

Now, it may be proper to call this consciousness, of things as real, the potentiality of the complete knowledge of nature as an orderly system with uniform laws; and in the same way, the conception of the Uniformity of Nature is the ideal of all the generalisations by which knowledge progresses towards it. But to identify the mere consciousness of an objective world with the fully developed notion of the Uniformity of Nature is to make the whole labour and progress of knowledge unmeaning and useless; and this is what Mill means by his denial of the *a priori* character of the principle that the

course of nature is uniform.[1] It is not really inconsistent with this denial to make the consciousness of nature as an objective unity the implicit ground of knowledge. The appearance of contradiction between the statements is due to Mill's failure to distinguish between the explicit conception in which our knowledge of nature is supposed to be completely realised, and the point of view which is implied in every stage of that knowledge—between the results and the constitution of experience.

What is involved in the possibility of knowledge is the consciousness of an object: of relations whose reality does not depend upon our recognition of them; of the unity or self-consistency of the world of fact; and this is what is meant by making unconditional relation, or the uniformity of nature, the ground of induction. There is, in fact, only one intuition—if we choose to call it so—the intuition of the whole; and no truth is necessary, except the whole truth. The ground of all knowledge is necessity, objectivity of relations, the presence in things themselves of those connecting bonds

[1] Cf. chap. iii.

which our knowledge seeks in them. This is the one necessity of thought. Without it, knowledge cannot be; but experience itself, determined by this point of view, is the source of all those complex presentations which constitute our knowledge. That the experience which furnishes knowledge is determined by consciousness of the objective world does not mean that knowledge contains elements not produced by experience.

The idea of causality as an unconditional relation, which belongs to Mill's assertion of the objective reference of knowledge, determines his conception of Inductive Reasoning. But not only does induction rest, in this way—as all knowledge may be said to rest—upon the law of causation: it is also the special development of knowledge which investigates causes. "To determine the effect of every cause, and the causes of all effects, is the main business of Induction;"[1] "the problem of Inductive Logic may be summed up in two questions: how to ascertain the laws of nature; and how, after having ascertained them, to follow them into

[1] Logic, p. 247.

their results."[1] Induction is thus primarily a regress from complex things to their conditions: to the simpler elements which constitute them; to the factors of which they are products. The kind of explanation that induction gives of any phenomenon consists in pointing out "some more general phenomenon, of which it is a partial exemplification; or some laws of causation which produce it by their joint or successive action, and from which, therefore, its conditions may be determined deductively."[2] The problem of induction is, in fact, that of analysis: it breaks up the complexity of individual concrete facts into simpler and ultimately into the simplest and most general facts. This is the resolution of experience into its lowest terms—into its most general truths. It is the interpretation of every whole in terms of its parts—of every complex fact or event in terms of facts or events which are less complex.[3]

Now, such a view of induction implies that the conception of Causality on which it rests is not that of temporal sequence but that of unconditional relation; it assumes that things are capable

[1] Logic, p. 208. [2] Ibid., p. 311. [3] Ibid., p. 307.

of analysis into those conditions, the discovery of which constitutes its problem.

While Mill's logic is vitiated by his failure to recognise the reality of any relation more complex or more concrete than that of cause and effect, it should still be observed that the idea of relation implied in his theory of Induction might be made to authenticate a doctrine of Definition and Deduction widely different from his.

The theory of Definition which is associated with Mill's name is based upon his psychological view of the causal relation. But by this revised conception of causality Definition is made a possible result of induction. The idea that things are capable of expression in terms of their conditions makes real definition of them possible instead of mere description, or statement of the meaning of their names. Such true definition would be an account of the determining conditions of the thing—of the real elements to which its character must be referred. Definition, in this sense, is definition in terms of causes; it expresses discovery, and is not simply a statement of conventions; it may be a hypothetical judg-

ment, assuming the reality of the thing which is defined; but it is a statement about the thing, and not simply about its name; and such definition of things—impossible so long as they are fixed in abstract isolation from other things, and so from real conditions—becomes a possibility, and the goal of inductive science, when once it is understood that the nature of things can be expressed in terms of their causes. This statement of the nature of phenomena is what Mill represents as the aim of induction; and his refusal to recognise it as *definition* of things is part of his failure to give effect to his own correction of the psychological way of regarding knowledge.

Mill's theory of Deductive Reasoning, no less than of definition, might be revised, in the light of that conception of causality which determines his view of induction. To make the nature of things consist in the conditions of their existence —to regard an account of their causal relations as the explanation of what they are—is to recognise an universal element in the knowledge of objective reality; for such a conception of things completely does away with that abstract view of them which makes them merely particular and

separate and regards their relations as external to their nature; and the recognition that relations are objectively characters of things gives to the universal element, that is present in all predication, a legitimacy which it does not otherwise possess. Some such view of the causal relation as that which is suggested by Mill's assertion of its "unconditional" character is, in fact, the only ground upon which the assertion and proof of general truths can be justified. The truth of general statements implies the presence of a necessary or universal element in things, the objectivity of relations, the validity of causal explanation.

It cannot be said that Mill makes clear the significance, for the theory of reasoning, of his own doctrine that causality is an unconditional relation. But his assertion that inference is primarily "from particulars to particulars" accommodates itself to a less abstract conception of "particulars" than that which the statement naturally implies, and which belongs to Mill's sensationalist account of knowledge.

He recognises that knowledge involves elements which are general — that all real judg-

ment asserts with some degree of generality. For example, "it is only by means of general names that we can convey any information, predicate any attribute, even of an individual, much more of a class."[1] Judgment is essentially generalisation. It refers to the objective world some general character. No "attribute," as judgment ascribes it, can ever be regarded as merely particular; and the ideal character of judgment is betrayed by the impossibility of eradicating generality from the relations which it affirms. Mill goes still further in the same direction when he asserts that every inference to a particular implies a general truth. "Whenever the evidence, which we derive from observation of known cases, justifies us in drawing an inference respecting even one unknown case, we should on the same evidence be justified in drawing a similar inference with respect to a whole class of cases. The inference either does not hold at all, or it holds in all cases of a certain description; in all cases which, in certain definable respects, resemble those we have observed."[2]

[1] Logic, p. 436. [2] Ibid., p. 186; cf. p. 129.

All this connects itself with the view of relations, and primarily of causality, on which Mill's theory of Induction is founded; but the actual significance of that view is not given effect to by Mill in his doctrine of Syllogism. He does indeed admit the practical expediency of generalising all conclusions so as to test their legitimacy;[1] and he also defends the utility of general propositions, on the ground that, "though in strictness we may reason from past experience to a fresh individual case without the intermediate stage of a general proposition, yet without general propositions we should seldom remember what past experience we have had, and scarcely ever what conclusions that experience will warrant."[2] But such a statement hardly suggests the practical necessity which exists for the form of syllogism; and it does nothing to indicate the real worth which, on Mill's own showing, syllogistic argument might be held to possess. Rooted in his doctrine that the causal relation is unconditional, the idea that knowledge depends upon universal elements is explicitly conveyed in his assertion of the general

[1] Logic, p. 129. [2] Ibid., p. 435.

character of all predication. Even when inference appears to be from particular to particular, these particulars are not really so absolute, or self-contained, or separate from one another, as their name suggests. If they were wholly exclusive and disconnected, no inference from one to the other would be possible: if there were no relation actually between them, none could be constructed to connect them from without. But the existence of such relation rids them of their absolute particularity; and inference from one to the other is legitimate, simply because they are not mere abstract particulars, but have a common element: it is this common element that renders the transition possible, and enables us to infer. Inference from one particular to another is thus secondary to, and dependent on, inference from particular fact, to a general law which expresses the ground of proof.

On such a view of inference—and it is a view which Mill does more than merely suggest—the worth of syllogism is much more internal to knowledge than Mill conceives it to be; for if inference is made possible by the presence of universal elements in knowledge — by its im-

plied generality — then the selection of those elements, by which inference is determined, is at the root of the whole matter. Now, the function of syllogism is to make the determining qualities of things the ground of inference. The major premise is not, as Mill assumes, a mere collective statement of a definite or indefinite number of cases taken in extension. It is, as he himself might suggest, a judgment as to relations of attributes: it is the statement of a law. The object of syllogism is to infer the character of a particular fact, from a law which is recognised as applying to it; syllogistic argument is the determination of a concrete case by an abstract principle; it is the proof of a fact by its conditions. Mill's own conception of causality as an unconditional relation might, if he had given effect to it, have formed the basis for some such theory as this: it might have led him to ascribe to syllogism—as the expression of inference from laws or causes—a worth and an importance which he nowhere vindicates for it.

Mill himself recognises the necessity, for inference, of that abstraction which it is the function of syllogism to effect. "The voluntary

power," he says, "which the mind has of attending to one part of what is present to it at any moment, and neglecting another part, enables us to keep our reasonings and conclusions respecting the class unaffected by anything in the idea or mental image which is not really, or at least which we do not really believe to be, common to the whole class." [1]

Reasoning is always hypothetical. "An Inference is nothing but a necessary truth;" [2] or, as Mill says, "the only sense in which necessity can be ascribed to the conclusions of any scientific investigation, is that of legitimately following from some assumption, which, by the conditions of the inquiry, is not to be questioned." [3] The hypothesis on which inference rests is the limitation of attention to the common element in the particular facts; and syllogism is the definite expression of this hypothesis. In this way, by expressing and defining the abstract relation, syllogism secures its relevancy for purposes of proof; and it seems reasonable to regard the syllogistic procedure, which performs this function,

[1] Logic, p. 425; cf. p. 148.

[2] Mr Bradley's Principles of Logic, p. 221. [3] Logic, p. 149.

as more than a merely formal or external expression of thought: syllogism is, in fact, as Aristotle held, the normal and complete expression of reasoning.

Syllogism gives effect to the point of view which is implied in all reasoning. Reasoning implies systematic connection of things; for it affirms their connection, in virtue of common elements, and primarily in virtue of their causal relations; but the causal relation, and indeed all relation, implies system, since it implies a unity of things which is articulated in their various concrete and defined connections; and this unity of things means that they are elements in a system, or are related to one another according to a principle. Now, syllogism expresses this systematic character of reasoning, since it makes inference depend upon the common relation of particulars to a principle which determines their connection. Its function is to represent the relation between things as necessary; and this is a function which is so far from being accidental or external to inference, that it constitutes the very essence of all reasoning.

Mill's Logic is thus very far from being a con-

sistent whole. The constructive treatment of Induction, which is his most signal achievement as a logician, depends on a view of thought which does not affect his theory of definition and syllogism as it might do. His doctrine that definition is purely verbal, or refers only to names, and his assertion that the syllogistic form of inference has no demonstrative but only expository value, depend upon his psychological conception of causality. But he suggests ideas of judgment and inference which go far to correct his theory of definition and deduction, and which imply the inadequacy of a purely sensationalist account of relation. He does not, indeed, give effect to these ideas; and their place in his theory of reasoning hardly entitles us to say more than that certain elements in that theory are at variance with the psychological conception of knowledge which is its avowed basis. It is not to be denied, however, that his Logic contains a view of judgment, and of the causal relation, which cannot be reconciled with his sensationalism; and this view is at the root of the most important part of his theory—his doctrine of Induction.

CHAPTER V

SELF-CONCERN

Mill's limitation of knowledge to subjective mental states evidences itself in his theory of conduct no less than of knowledge. His individualism affects his idea of desire, just as it moulds his conception of the character of definition and inference. We have already seen that his view of experience as simply a complex of sensations is at the root of his logical nominalism. The same view of experience lends itself to his assertion that pleasure is the sole object of desire, and that all action is determined by the idea of pleasure.

Psychological Hedonism is not a new acquisition with Mill: it forms part of his heritage of "experience-philosophy." Apart from its influence in ancient philosophy, it had been made an

integral part of the basis of ethics by Hobbes, and, after him, in the 'Système de la Nature,'[1] and in the beginnings of English Utilitarianism. It formed an essential, though disguised element, in Paley's doctrine of obligation;[2] and it was the dominant conception of James Mill's ethics.[3] It received, however, its most definite expression in Bentham's assertion that "Nature has placed mankind under the governance of two sovereign masters, *pain* and *pleasure*. It is for them alone . . . to determine what we shall do. On the one hand the standard of right and wrong, on the other the chain of causes and effects, are fastened to their throne. They govern us in all we do, in all we say, in all we think: every effort we can make to throw off our subjection, will serve but to demonstrate and confirm it. In words a man may pretend to abjure their empire: but in reality he will remain subject to it all the while."[4]

Such a statement as this left nothing to be

[1] Système de la Nature (1781), vol. i. p. 268, quoted by Professor Sorley, Ethics of Naturalism, p. 23.

[2] Paley's Principles of Moral and Political Philosophy, bk. ii. chap. ii.

[3] James Mill's Analysis of the Human Mind, chap. xxii.

[4] Bentham's Principles of Morals and Legislation, chap. i.

desired or achieved in the way of definiteness and thoroughness: Mill found psychological hedonism ready to his hand. Yet it hardly needs to be pointed out how inevitably this doctrine connects itself with the individualism of Mill's theory of knowledge. If nothing can be directly known but subjective states, then nothing else can be desired; for desire is limited, in respect of its objects, by knowledge; and we can desire only what we can think. If our knowledge of things in their relation to our activity is limited to the pleasure and pain effects that they produce in us, plainly we can desire only the production and avoidance of these effects, and our actions must be determined wholly by the idea of them.

While, however, psychological hedonism is thus rooted in a sensationalist account of knowledge, it also exemplifies another aspect of individualism. It depends on an abstraction or separation of the thinking subject not merely from the world of objects, but also from the moral world of other persons. It expresses a complete limitation of the interests of each individual to the closed circle of his own feelings. In so far as other persons enter into the cal-

culations of the agent, they are regarded, according to this theory, merely as circumstances. They themselves—their interests and rights—are in no sense ends. If they are considered, it is because their advantage is a means to that of the agent himself—because he conceives that he will gain a greater balance of pleasure by serving them than he can obtain otherwise. They form part of the environment, and so they must be taken into account; but as ends they are ignored wholly.

This opinion is frankly accepted by Mill. "There is in reality nothing desired," he says, "except happiness. Whatever is desired otherwise than as a means to some end beyond itself, and ultimately to happiness, is desired as itself a part of happiness, and is not desired for itself until it has become so."[1] The object of desire, for Mill, is a state of feeling. It can be nothing else, since no individual can know anything beyond his feelings. It is to be observed that this does not simply mean that action takes the direction most pleasant for the agent,[2] or that pleasure

[1] Utilitarianism, p. 57.

[2] Cf. Mr Stephen's Science of Ethics, p. 50; Professor Sorley's Ethics of Naturalism, pp. 23-25.

actually results from the satisfaction of desire by action.[1] Such interpretations are not, indeed, excluded by the ambiguous statement "that desiring a thing and finding it pleasant, aversion to it and thinking of it as painful, are phenomena entirely inseparable, or rather two parts of the same phenomenon."[2] But Mill's use of this and other statements consists in making them a ground for finding the springs of conduct in desire for feelings of pleasure. It is his whole intention to make out that desire is primarily for pleasant feeling, and that other things, including morality and social wellbeing, come to be desired by being associated with the idea of pleasure.[3] This is the view of which he makes actual use in his hedonistic ethical construction;[4] and it is the view which naturally follows from his individualistic account of thought.

Mill's treatment of Political Economy contains elements which give effect to this conception of the individual. His ethical ideas in general stand in the closest reciprocal relations with his

[1] Cf. Green's Prolegomena to Ethics, pp. 163-177.
[2] Utilitarianism, p. 58. [3] Cf. ibid., p. 60.
[4] Ibid., p. 58, &c.

economics; and his psychological hedonism, in particular, connects itself with certain assumptions which are common to him with other economists. These assumptions find their most definite expression in the idea of what is known as the "economic man" — the view of human nature which forms the starting-point of economic theory. Mill defines this view so clearly that his statement of it is worth quoting at some length: "Political Economy does not treat of the whole of man's nature as modified by the social state, nor of the whole conduct of man in society. It is concerned with him solely as a being who desires to possess wealth, and who is capable of judging of the comparative efficacy of means for obtaining that end. It predicts only such of the phenomena of the social state as take place in consequence of the pursuit of wealth. It makes entire abstraction of every other human passion or motive, except those which may be regarded as perpetually antagonising principles to the desire of wealth, namely, aversion to labour, and desire of the present enjoyment of costly indulgences. . . . Political Economy considers mankind as occupied solely in acquiring and con-

suming wealth; and aims at showing what is the course of action into which mankind, living in a state of society, would be impelled, if that motive, except in the degree in which it is checked by the two perpetual countermotives above adverted to, were absolute ruler of all their actions." Mill regards Political Economy as completely defined by the statement that it is "the science which traces the laws of such of the phenomena of society as arise from the combined operations of mankind for the production of wealth, in so far as these phenomena are not modified by the pursuit of any other object." He points out that Political Economy presupposes "an arbitrary definition of man, as a being who invariably does that by which he may obtain the greatest amount of necessaries, conveniences, and luxuries, with the smallest quantity of labour and physical self-denial with which they can be obtained in the existing state of knowledge."[1]

It must of course be kept in mind that Mill explicitly regards this assumption as an arbitrary one; and we shall have to consider presently

[1] Unsettled Questions of Political Economy, pp. 137-144.

the extent and significance of his corrections of it. But he asserts that it is essential to the very existence of Political Economy as a science, and that it is a legitimate and useful abstraction; and his economic work is also powerfully affected by a view of wealth which is closely related to this abstract hypothesis—the "notion sufficiently correct for common purposes," which identifies wealth with value in exchange.[1] It cannot be doubted, in view of his actual corrections of the economic abstraction, that his acceptance of it as a working hypothesis is partly determined by its congruence with the doctrine of psychological hedonism; and it is also probable that the influence, through his economic studies, of the abstract theory of Ricardo may have helped to strengthen the hold which psychological hedonism had upon his mind. While the economic abstraction may be thought legitimate, apart from any special theory of desire, it undoubtedly gains considerable *prestige* from a hedonistic psychology; and the habit of using the individualistic hypothesis, on which Political Economy has been made to depend, constitutes

[1] Political Economy, pp. 1-4.

a real predisposition to adopt an individualistic view of conduct; for such a view of conduct goes far to clear away the difficulties which are apt to arise from the abstract character of the economic hypothesis.

It thus appears that three elements at least, in Mill's philosophical heritage, conspired to bias him in the direction of individualism. He had inherited, from his predecessors in psychological and metaphysical speculation, a theory of knowledge which limited it to the subjective states of the individual consciousness, from which an external or objective world could only be doubtfully and indirectly inferred. He was thus committed, by his philosophical education and antecedents, to a conception of man as isolated from the real world and incapable of knowing anything beyond the limits of his own mind. He had also learned, from Bentham, to regard subjective states of mind—pleasant feelings—as the only possible objects of desire; and the individualistic sensationalism of his philosophical upbringing made it impossible for him at first to criticise this theory. The "Principles of Morals and Legislation" came to him, as it

were, as "a friend with whom his education had made him long familiar"; and he was thus led to conceive man as bound over to the moral isolation of self-concern, as well as to separation from the world of objective knowledge. With these two elements we must also include the influence of the Ricardian economics, which formed part of his philosophical creed, and gave him a sphere for applying, as well as grounds for supporting, his individualistic conception of human desire and of personality in general.

But however powerfully Mill may have been influenced by the individualism of these theories, it did not retain any final or absolute hold upon his mind. He did not, in fact, continue to be merely the disciple or exponent of those from whom he received the tradition of empiricism. Empiricism underwent, in his hands, a real development; and the significance of his philosophy consists less in the limitations which he inherited than in the presence of other tendencies, which may be inconsistent with his avowed principles, but which are genuinely characteristic of his thinking. He never, certainly, realised how far his positive investigation had led him

from the theory of knowledge on which he continued explicitly to base it. But however little he might be aware of the inadequacy of his philosophical creed, or able to make clear to himself the logic of another theory of knowledge and conduct, Mill did, in vitally important respects, shake off the individualism of the empiricist tradition. His thought remains coloured by it: it forms, as we have seen, an element in his speculative result; but there are also in his philosophy other elements which constitute a departure from it.

The essence of that individualistic bias, which Mill inherited from his predecessors, is the assertion of an abstract subjectivity as absolute and complete reality. It is the conception of individuality as an exclusive or repellent rather than a synthetic or uniting principle. The idea of human personality on which it depends is that of an isolated, inaccessible, and impenetrable subject.

Now it is at all events a partial correction of this mistake to regard man, with all his functions, as an element in the real world; and this is how Mill actually thinks of human life. The very

essence of his work as a philosopher is that he makes man an object of inductive study, and accepts human life and conduct as a part or aspect of reality. He considers man as an element in nature, and makes not only organic life, but mental change too, in all its aspects, an object of experience among other objects, and related to them as fact to fact. He regards human personality as part of that succession of changes which we call nature, and the conception of man's relation to nature is vital to his point of view.[1]

This objectification of human personality removes the abstraction of individualism. For scientific investigation of anything—the attempt to discover what it is, or to define its nature—is a study of relations. It is an inquiry into resemblances and differences, causes and effects; and to attempt such an inquiry into any object is to assume its real relatedness to other objects. As Mill himself says, "we cannot describe a fact without implying more than the fact. The perception is only of one individual thing; but to describe it is to affirm a connection between it

[1] *Vide* chaps. vi. and vii.

and every other thing which is either denoted or connoted by any of the terms used."[1] In making man an object of experience, then, and of science, which is simply developed and specialised experience, we regard him as related to other facts, and part of the order of nature. Mill's most characteristic philosophical quality is a real consciousness of man as an object of knowledge; and this is radically inconsistent with the individualistic view of man as simply "subject." This "naturalistic" character of Mill's philosophy is his unconscious correction of the abstract logic of individualism.

This objective view of human life connects itself, as we shall see, with the "positive" or scientific character of Mill's philosophical interests. He does not aim at the construction of a philosophy, in the sense of a system of principles. His philosophy is all contained in his scientific treatment of certain classes of facts. He philosophises, simply as occasion serves or compels him, in the course of his exposition of logic, psychology, ethics, or politics. Just on this account, his nominal adherence to the in-

[1] Logic, p. 422.

dividualism of his predecessors finds comparatively little to evidence it in his real thinking. The objectivity of science is, in fact, inconsistent with such abstraction. In serious thinking about things as they are, the individualistic standpoint cannot be maintained: the logic of mere identity breaks down. Every act of predication is a practical denial of the separateness of individual things, and an affirmation of their ultimate unity of relation; for if things were "cut off with a hatchet," predication would be falsification, and science would be impossible. We cannot think facts in terms of abstract identity or of mere difference; for the very essence of thinking is synthesising; and the legitimacy of this depends on the real relation of things to each other. It was in the prosecution of his scientific task—in his attempt to know the human interests—that Mill's individualism fell away from him, and left him face to face with the order of nature and the issues of life.

But if Mill, in this way, outgrew the limitations of his early sectarianism, in the course of his effort to investigate knowledge and conduct, he was influenced in the same direction by con-

tact with other minds, of a different order from those by which his early education had been moulded. His gradual emancipation from the influences under which he grew up culminated in entire dissatisfaction with the hunger-bitten philosophy of his teachers, and left him open to impressions of another kind. He found himself dissatisfied not simply with the speculative basis, but, still more fatally, with the practical ideals of his juvenile Radicalism; and his intellectual life lost, for a time, that philanthropic impulse which was required to make it fruitful.[1] This internal failure of his philosophy taught Mill the importance (even from a purely hedonistic point of view) of some kind of disinterestedness;

[1] Autobiography, p. 133. "It occurred to me to put the question directly to myself: 'Suppose that all your objects in life were realised; that all the changes in institutions and opinions which you are looking forward to, could be completely effected at this very instant: would this be a great joy and happiness to you?' And an irrepressible self-consciousness distinctly answered, 'No!' At this my heart sank within me: the whole foundation on which my life was constructed fell down. All my happiness was to have been found in the continual pursuit of this end. The end had ceased to charm, and how could there ever again be any interest in the means? I seemed to have nothing left to live for."

and it impressed him with the necessity for a cultivation of emotional as well as of active and intellectual life.[1]

It was in this state of mind, and at this "crisis in his mental history," that Mill read Wordsworth,[2] and discovered his "healing power"; and the satisfaction which he got from Wordsworth's expression of "states of feeling, and of thought coloured by feeling, under the excitement of beauty,"[3] was a decisive factor in his development. It not only restored him to a more tranquil state of mind, so that he felt himself "at once better and happier";[3] but it also quickened his intellectual sympathies, and transformed his dissatisfaction with his former aims and beliefs into a serious effort to appreciate those of another school of philosophy, towards which he had hitherto adopted an attitude merely of antagonism. His intimacy with Maurice and Sterling, which this change of attitude made possible, introduced him to the philosophical writings of Coleridge; and by the influence of Coleridge and Carlyle, and,

[1] Autobiography, pp. 142, 143.

[2] Ibid., pp. 146 ff. [3] Ibid., p. 148.

through them, of German thought, his philosophical standpoint was profoundly modified, so that Carlyle said, "Here is a new Mystic,"[1] and Mill's former associates observed the change in his opinions with the gravest apprehension. His political ideas were at the same time considerably affected by those of St Simon and his school.

Mill's subsequent attitude towards Bentham shows the extent of this change in his intellectual sympathies. While he retains the highest respect for the strength, directness, and systematic quality of Bentham's intellectual methods,[2] as well as for his work as a reformer,[3] he misses in him much that he has learned to demand and appreciate. He finds in him too much of a "resolute denial of all that he does not see,"[4] and a fatal "deficiency of Imagination."[5] To this lack of imagination, indeed, Mill attributes Bentham's want of sympathy with ages and characters other than his own, and the fact that he sees in man "little

[1] Autobiography, p. 174.

[2] Ibid., p. 214; Dissertations and Discussions, vol. i. p. 382.

[3] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. i. p. 333.

[4] Ibid., p. 356.

[5] Ibid., p. 353.

but what the vulgarest eye can see."[1] Mill even finds "ignorance of the deeper springs of human character"[2] in Bentham's failure to recognise, as he should do, not only desire of perfection, sense of honour, and love of order, of beauty, of power, and of action, but also the influence of art in fashioning and transforming human life.[3] But far more definite than any of these criticisms, as a proof of Mill's real abandonment of Benthamism, is his attack on Bentham's neglect of the moral consciousness itself as a fact in human nature. "Man is never recognised" by Bentham, he says, "as a being capable of pursuing spiritual perfection as an end; of desiring, for its own sake, the conformity of his own character to his standard of excellence, without hope of good or fear of evil from other source than his own inward consciousness. Even in the more limited form of Conscience, this great fact in human nature escapes him. Nothing is more curious than the absence of recognition in any of his writings of the existence of conscience, as a thing distinct from philanthropy, from affection for God or man, and

[1] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. i. p. 355.
[2] Ibid., p. 389. [3] Ibid.

from self-interest in this world or in the next. There is a studied abstinence from any of the phrases which, in the mouths of others, import the acknowledgment of such a fact."[1]

It is a highly significant element in Mill's attitude towards ethical and political questions that he attaches, in this way, much greater importance than his predecessors to the possibility of unselfish motives. He points out that "mankind are capable of a far greater amount of public spirit than the present age is accustomed to hold possible;"[2] and his disbelief in universal selfishness is so complete that he has "no difficulty in admitting that Communism would even now be practicable among the *élite* of mankind, and may become so among the rest."[3] He asserts, in the most unequivocal way, the immediacy, naturalness, and force of social feeling. "The social state is at once so natural, so necessary, and so habitual to man, that, except in some unusual circumstances or by an effort of voluntary abstraction, he never conceives himself otherwise than

[1] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. i. p. 359.

[2] Political Economy, p. 127.

[3] Representative Government, p. 55.

as a member of a body;"[1] and the feelings that arise from this organic relation to society are so strong and so persistent that they constitute a "firm foundation" for morality. The "feeling of unity" with others may become so strong as to prevent the individual from desiring any benefit for himself in which they are not included.[2] "To those who have it, it possesses all the characters of a natural feeling. It does not present itself to their minds as a superstition of education, or a law despotically imposed by the power of society, but as an attribute which it would not be well for them to be without."[3] Mill joins with Comte, therefore, "in contemning, as equally irrational and mean, the conception of human nature as incapable of giving its love and devoting its existence to any object which cannot afford in exchange an eternity of personal enjoyment."[4] He affirms that the Religion of Humanity fulfils the essential condition of a genuine religion — "strong and earnest direction of the emotions and desires towards an ideal object, recognised as of the highest excellence and as

[1] Utilitarianism, p. 46. [2] Ibid., p. 48.
[3] Ibid., p. 50. [4] Auguste Comte and Positivism, p. 135.

rightfully paramount over all selfish objects of desire;"[1] and he considers that the danger of such a religion, as a motive power, is "not that it should be insufficient, but that it should be so excessive as to interfere unduly with human freedom and individuality."[2]

We need not pause to inquire into the truth of this high doctrine. However far it may seem from us, "in the time of the present distress," we cannot doubt the serious intention with which Mill asserted his faith in such a possibility. To entertain such hopes for mankind could not seem a light thing to him; and that he did entertain them there is no room for doubt. His ethical convictions are rooted in them, and even his conception of economic method accommodates itself to their presence.

His estimate of the significance of social feeling affects Mill's theory of economics in a twofold way.

In the first place, he insists, as his predecessors had not done, on the hypothetical character of Political Economy.[3] He points out that its

[1] Essays on Religion, p. 109. [2] Utilitarianism, p. 49.

[3] Cf. Professor Ingram's History of Political Economy, p. 155.

deductions are based on an abstract or hypothetical conception of human nature. He is aware, as Ricardo was not, of the distinction between the "economic man" and actual human persons. He knows the reality and importance of altruistic motives.

But, in the second place, Mill even takes a further step, under the influence of his belief in unselfish desires. His recognition of the real prevalence of motives other than the greed and indolence of the "economic man" renders him sceptical of the utility and even the legitimacy of the economic abstraction.

The complexity of all causation prejudices Mill against belief in the utility of formulæ and deductions in general:[1] he understands that omissions in the premises lead to errors in the results of an investigation.[2] His partial antagonism to Benthamism, too, deepens his sense of the multiplicity of causes in social life. His assertion of the real extent of disinterested feeling and action makes him realise how much is left out of account in rigid adherence to economic method.

[1] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. i. p. 208. [2] Ibid., p. 349.

He does, indeed, as we have seen, defend the procedure of economics on the ground of the hypothetical character of the science, and the possibility of correcting empirically the hypothetical result. But the case against this method of investigation has never been stated more pointedly and definitely, in its practical aspect, than by Mill himself. "There is little chance," he says, "of making due amends in the superstructure of a theory for the want of sufficient breadth in its foundations. It is unphilosophical to construct a science out of a few of the agencies by which the phenomena are determined, and leave the rest to the routine of practice, or the sagacity of conjecture. We either ought not to pretend to scientific forms, or we ought to study all the determining agencies equally, and endeavour, so far as it can be done, to include all of them within the pale of the science; else we shall infallibly bestow a disproportionate attention upon those which our theory takes into account, while we misestimate the rest, and probably underrate their importance."[1] Mill's views on this point are, in fact, not such

[1] Logic, p. 583.

as to form a consistent doctrine. He is prevented from accepting the method of economics, as he finds it and defends it, because those factors, from which the economic point of view abstracts, bulk so largely in his conception of the causation of conduct that their omission goes far to render economic calculation worthless.

It is part of this sceptical treatment of the economic abstraction that Mill endeavours to substitute, in his actual discussion of the problems, the idea of a "standard of comfort" for that of the "economic man." His emphasis on this idea, which was itself derived from Ricardo,[1] is an important change in the method of economics. The idea plays a much more considerable part with Mill than with his predecessors, and its employment is a real advance in concreteness. It constitutes a substitution of real factors — states of actual desire and will — for the abstract or hypothetical "economic man," whose desire and indolence are purely indefinite, determined in their effects simply by the con-

[1] Cf. Ricardo's 'Principles of Political Economy,' ch. v., quoted by Professor Marshall; *vide* Professor Marshall's 'Principles of Economics' (2nd ed.), vol. i. pp. 551-553.

ditions in which he happens to be placed. This clearer recognition of actual human character, with all its varied desires and tendencies, as one of the factors in economic processes, constitutes an abandonment of the point of view which had limited economics to the abstract consideration of purely commercial motives and their effects.[1]

This altered conception of economic method is beyond doubt partly due to Mill's belief in the influence which so-called "non-economic" motives exert; and nothing could more strikingly illustrate the hold which that belief has upon his mind. In view of such an estimate of the possibility of disinterested social feeling as is indicated both in his explicit utterances and in the adaptation of his economic method to include it as a factor, it is not easy to attach much importance to his adhesion to the doctrine of psychological hedonism. The doctrine has come to mean so little that what is left is hardly worth criticising; and even this residue seems to be given up in the admission that "when the will

[1] Cf. Appendix to Professor Bain's John Stuart Mill: a Criticism, by J. E. Cairnes.

is said to be determined by motives, a motive does not mean always, or solely, the anticipation of a pleasure or of a pain."[1] The impossibility of desiring anything except pleasant feeling does not seem to count for much in the assertion of cases in which "action itself becomes an object of desire, and is performed without reference to any motive beyond itself,"[2] or in the demand that virtue should be "desired disinterestedly, for itself."[3]

Such utterances really constitute an abandonment of the doctrine of inevitable self-concern. It may remain true that a man can only act as he pleases; and indeed it is not easy to see who can have any interest in disputing a proposition which is at once so innocent, so self-evident, and so uninforming: but this harmless necessary remnant of psychological hedonism does not isolate human desire either from the actual things in which the joy of life is found, or from those social feelings which men have sometimes tried to regard as a mere artificial perversion of self-love.

It cannot be said that Mill explicitly abandons

[1] Logic, p. 551. [2] Ibid. [3] Utilitarianism, p. 54.

psychological hedonism. His belief that pleasure alone is desired is his express ground for asserting that it alone is desirable. He retains the form of the doctrine, and uses it as the basis of his ethical theory. But his corrections and limitations of it are so considerable and so vital, that he thinks of man, not as an isolated subject buried in his own self-concern, but as, in his own nature, heir to the riches of the world, and a member of society.

CHAPTER VI

LIFE IN NATURE

THE vexed question of Mill's relation to Positivism has a real and not merely an antiquarian interest in the study of his philosophy; for, in some important respects, his work has the character to which the name "positive" is generally applied. He is justified, indeed, in his protest against being considered a Positivist, in the narrow or technical sense of the term; but it is none the less true that the intention and the subject-matter of his investigations are such as to connect his work with the positive philosophies.

Positivism is essentially a theory of practice. Comte's saying, "*Voir pour prévoir, prévoir pour pourvoir*," expresses the Positivist conception of

science; and this way of regarding knowledge is strikingly exemplified by Mill: the motive of his philosophy is mainly ethical; his aim is that of a reformer; he prosecutes the work of science for the sake of practice, as part of an effort to secure the means of human wellbeing. Every science interests him primarily as a study of the conditions of some practical benefit.

Logic, for example, is the science of evidence; it is the theory of correct thinking; its object is to investigate the methods of discovery and proof; it is the science on which the art of right thinking is based; and every other part of Mill's philosophical activity bears an equally direct relation to some practical ideal. Speculative results hardly possess for him an independent value. Their interest is mainly secondary: they are chiefly important as reasons for conduct, or statements of the effect of actions or circumstances on the interests of human life. Even when Mill is not arguing definitely for a reform, or a practical improvement, the consequences of his theories are never wholly absent from his thoughts. The utility of a way of thinking is always, with him, an important argument in its

favour. His mind inclines steadily to those beliefs—whether scientific, moral, or religious—whose usefulness is evident.

The practical or humanistic bent of Positivism determines its scientific character. Because its interest centres in practice, it makes human life its object and investigates the conditions of human development and satisfaction. In this respect also Mill exhibits positivist tendencies. His humanism limits his interest to the sciences of human life. Man, in his varied relations and endeavours, is practically his sole topic. Whatever problems he finds in nature or in the abstract conditions of existence, he interprets in terms of human interest and effort.

No less akin to Positivism is the connection between Mill's practical standpoint and his view of the limits of science—the view that regards ultimate causes as radically inaccessible to human knowledge, and confines investigation to phenomena. This limitation of knowledge to phenomena is a theoretical expression of the fact that Mill investigates primarily the conditions of human satisfaction; and this relation to his positive interests is its chief significance in his philo-

sophy. It belongs to the complete restriction of his interest to human wellbeing and the modes of its production. It is not rooted in any metaphysical agnosticism; such assertive agnosticism was profoundly repugnant to Mill; and even his polemic criticism of "metaphysical" conceptions is only an incident in the defence of what he conceives to be a more excellent way of studying human advantage. The motive of his aversion to metaphysic is his belief that the scientific or analytic investigation of human life and its conditions is best calculated to lead to real improvement.

In his philosophy, then, Mill's deepest and most persistent interest—his practical aim—is expressed in his "naturalism." His constructive work is largely determined by this point of view; and his interest in defending it is also the ground of his negative attitude towards metaphysics. Our review of his philosophy must include a statement of some of the leading conceptions in which its naturalistic side is developed.

The essence of Mill's naturalism consists in his making man an object of inductive study. He

is dominated by a consciousness of man's place among the objects of experience. He considers every human activity as a cause of effects and an effect of causes, and so a part of "nature" in that wide sense of the word in which it means simply the object of knowledge—the "*facies totius universi.*"

In this use of the word "nature" to mean the entire system of things (which Mill regards as "the true scientific sense"),[1] the inclusion of man in it is presupposed by every serious attempt to understand him. So much of "naturalism" there is in every theory of human life. In some form, and at some degree of removal, the facts of man's life — his "nature" — must form the basis of every such theory. The difference of philosophical opinion, and the real difference of method corresponding to it, lie in the answers given to the question how man is related to the world of non-human nature.

Mill's answer to this question evinces his naturalism in a more definite way than the mere fact of his scientific study of human life can be held to do. We shall have to see, in our survey

[1] Essays on Religion, p. 7.

of what we may call Mill's "Anthropology"—his theory of man's actual constitution and functions—how close and binding he conceives the relation to be between man and the world in which he lives. Meantime we may note that this more strict and definite "naturalism" is by no means unconnected with that objective and inductive way of studying man which is so characteristic of Mill.

Analysis is, for Mill, the essence of knowledge. The aim of all science, as of observation itself,[1] is to resolve complex realities into their component parts. Scientific progress—growth in the knowledge of things — consists in the progressive "mental decomposition of facts."[2] Science, that is to say, is a search for the constituent elements, or factors, of the products which it investigates: its problem is the resolution of complex realities into their simplest elements. Now, in connection with this scientific ideal it is significant for Mill's view of the relation of human life to nature that he insists that explanation must be in terms of real factors: it cannot consist merely in hypotheses whose sole

[1] Logic, p. 248. [2] Ibid., p. 249.

claim on our acceptance is their power of explaining the known phenomena.[1] On the other hand, it is no less significant that he always regards "the swathes and bands of ordinary classification" as a tentative and temporary shift, by which our "discriminating faculty" must not be imprisoned. He demands a perpetual readiness to carry analysis beyond any point at which its progress may seem to have been arrested;[2] and even when two phenomena are found to be irreducibly distinct, he still thinks it possible to regard them as causally connected.[3]

On such a view as this of the nature of explanation, and the directions which it may and must take, the discovery of a real connection of human life and society with the natural order becomes at once possible, and, in a sense, necessary: possible, because all conventional limits to analysis have been set aside, and the singleness of reality has become an expected result; necessary, because intellectual clearness demands at once a complete analysis and an analysis into real factors. It is only natural after this that Mill should think it a merit in De Tocqueville's

[1] Logic, pp. 328, 329. [2] Ibid., p. 249. [3] Ibid., p. 516.

work that he "applied to the greatest question in the art and science of government those principles and methods of philosophising to which mankind are indebted for all the advances made by modern times in the other branches of the study of nature."[1] It is not even surprising to find that he regards the methods of physical and moral science as essentially one, and that he sees no impossibility in purely naturalistic interpretations of moral and social life, or in the recognition of a causal relation between mind and matter. Mill's naturalistic account of man—his tendency to explain man in terms of nature—is thus no less rooted in a logical demand than we have already seen it to be in a practical ideal. It depends upon his conception of scientific explanation as an analysis of phenomena.

This attempt to explain human in terms of natural relations is not, of course, new with Mill: we have only to do with an interesting and highly suggestive development of one of the permanent directions of human thought. Mill would have recognised the application to his

[1] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. ii. p. 4.

own naturalism of his remark about "Positivism": that "the philosophy called Positive is not a recent invention of M. Comte, but a simple adherence to the traditions of all the great scientific minds whose discoveries have made the human race what it is."[1] But it is none the less true that Mill's account of man's relation to nature has special characteristics, which are due to the influences under which it was developed. Mill is, in fact, chiefly to be understood, in this connection, as the successor and spiritual descendant of the English psychologists, and especially of Hartley and James Mill.

Naturalistic psychology was systematised by Hartley much more fully than by any previous writer. It became in his hands an attempt to give an analytic account of the mental process, as an orderly and sequent unity, dependent for the very conditions of its existence upon its relation to organic states, and so to the external world; and Mill's idea of mental life and its relation to nature is largely formed upon Hartley's. Specially in his resolution of all mental development into Association of Ideas, Hartley

[1] Auguste Comte and Positivism, p. 9.

has a quite decisive influence upon Mill's view of knowledge. This conception of Association, as practically the sole principle of mental growth, systematically stated by Hartley, and developed by James Mill, forms the main term of psychological explanation for Mill.[1]

Apart, however, from any definite psychological theory which Mill may have learned from his predecessors, it is significant of the English derivation and character of his positivism that he asserts the possibility and usefulness of psychology itself. In this important assertion he is in direct opposition to the positive philosophy of Comte. Comtism is, as it were, a Catholic positivism, making little of the individual. Mill's positivism, on the other hand, is English and Protestant, full of the consciousness of the individual, and resolute in the attempt to know human nature on its subjective side. Mill regards Comte's denial, and consequent omission, of Psychology as "not a mere hiatus in M. Comte's system, but the parent of serious errors in his attempt to create a Social Science."[2]

[1] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. iii. p. 108.

[2] Auguste Comte and Positivism, pp. 66, 67.

The difference is in fact of greater importance than might appear at first sight. It means that Mill's view of man includes an element of which Comte, while he does not deny its reality, takes no scientific cognisance; and it constitutes a difference in the estimation of personal life which goes far to account for the divergence of the ethical theories of Mill and Comte.

But, even in his assertion, against Comte, of the possibility and usefulness of knowing conscious states by direct observation, Mill holds no truce with dogmatic spiritualism. He asserts, indeed, strenuously and consistently, the impossibility of substituting physiology for psychology.[1] Psychology is limited by the possibility of introspection. From whatever sources, or in whatever ways, the knowledge may be obtained, of facts that are used in psychological explanation, these are psychologically relevant only in so far as they can be related to facts that are known introspectively. Direct consciousness of mental states gives the only clue to the psychological interpretation of whatever facts may be other-

[1] Logic, p. 556.

wise observed. Mere description, however, of mental states cannot be regarded as in any degree a solution of the problem of psychology; and Mill's belief, that direct self-observation is essential to psychology, does not prevent him from recognising the distinction between descriptive classification of mental states and genuine analysis of them. Nothing short of such analysis, however, can give a real account of mental life.

The problem with which Mill has thus to deal is that of the possibility of psychology—whether, namely, within the limits of psychology, a thorough analysis of mental states can be achieved. This analysis can only be regarded as complete when the "mental decomposition" of mental processes is carried so far that their complexity is resolved into a series of changes which are self-evident and, for our knowledge, necessary. Now, conscious states, taken by themselves, do not furnish the spectacle of such a series as this: psychology, in so far as its results are furnished by simple introspection, is merely empirical. Psychological analysis reveals, in fact, only an actual sequence of presentations. It may be supposed to yield more than this, by a confusion of

the relation between cognitive states with that which obtains between the objects that are known; but mental life itself is, for our observation, discontinuous. The stages of the mental series do not follow one another "unconditionally." When we take them by themselves, we do not discover a self-evident connection between them. The analysis of mental facts into simpler mental facts can never be carried so far as to yield the knowledge of a causal relation between the elements of mental life itself. It is therefore necessary to ask whether that relation, and the continuity which it gives, can be seen to belong to mental facts, when we remove the abstraction in which psychology regards them.

From one obvious way out of this difficulty Mill is debarred by his "positive" or phenomenalist view of mental life. The explanation of mental changes as results of the activity of a non-phenomenal Self—of a subject which is not a set of psychical events or factors—is impossible for him. The implication of such a Self in all knowledge he does indeed admit;[1] and we shall afterwards have to consider the importance of

[1] Examination of Hamilton, pp. 247 ff.

the admission for his whole theory of experience. But he recognises no *phenomenal* reality of mental life, other than the series of mental states; and psychology is a science of phenomena—an explanation of known realities by known realities. It is an instance of Mill's refusal to adopt this mode of completing the psychological explanation, that he will not account for the more obvious gaps or breaches in the continuity of the mental process by the hypothesis of "unconscious mental modifications." This hypothesis, primarily designed to meet the more considerable failures of strictly psychological analysis in the attempt to discover a continuous mental process, might, if its validity were admitted, be regarded as an explanation of the phenomenal mental life itself. It is therefore an important element, in Mill's criticism of Hamilton, that he declines this way out of the difficulty of psychological analysis:[1] in doing so, he simply affirms, in a definite instance, that limitation of the knowledge of mind to conscious states which he elsewhere generally asserts. To

[1] Examination of Hamilton, pp. 355 ff.; cf. James Mill's Analysis, note on chap. v.

affirm "unconscious mental modifications" as an explanation of the course of the conscious process, is really to make the non-phenomenal subject a term of psychological explanation.

The very words in which the hypothesis is, perforce, expressed, indicate its futility for the purposes of observational psychology. For such psychology, the "mental" is simply consciousness, and the "unconscious" is, in its very essence, not mental. The hypothesis constitutes a departure from the psychological point of view, and it furnishes no other. In point of fact, the non-phenomenal Self—the self regarded as essentially other than conscious states—is unavailable as a term of scientific explanation. Just because all mental states are inevitably characterised by their relation to the "subject," that relation cannot be treated as a mere factor in their development. It makes no difference between mental phenomena, because it belongs to all alike.

The essential incompleteness of psychological analysis is by no means clearly realised by Mill. He remains in great measure unaware of it, because his thought is largely governed by the assumptions of his psychological predecessors.

He is content to assume, with them, "sensations" out of which the complex unity of conscious life is built up. He does not state definitely whether these "sensations" are psychical or merely physical facts; nor does he appear to realise how powerfully the answer to this question affects the nature and limits of psychological analysis; but it is probable that he regards sensations in general, just as James Mill did, as mental units out of which perceptions are built up. In so far as he does so, he simply adopts from his predecessors that hypothesis to which the illusory appearance of completeness in their psychological analysis is mainly due. It cannot, however, be too definitely understood that "sensation," regarded as mental fact, is purely hypothetical. As Wundt says, "The . . . conception of sensation arises only from the necessities of psychological analysis. Simple sensation is never given to us in isolation, but is the result of an abstraction to which we are driven directly through the complex nature of all inner experiences."[1] Sensa-

[1] Wundt, Physiologische Psychologie, third ed., vol. i. p. 289. Cf. Professor Seth's Scottish Philosophy, Lecture iii.

tion does not exist in consciousness, otherwise than in the synthesis of the perceptive act; and the analogy of chemical elements, by which Wundt and others seek to defend the use of the hypothetical unit in psychology, is really not a correct one; for the very essence of the matter is that the psychological unit cannot exist in isolation, as the chemical element can and does. In so far as Mill is content to accept the hypothetical sensation unit, and to regard psychological analysis as effected when an explanation is obtained in terms of such sensation, he abandons his own demand for an analysis into "real" factors, and resorts to such a use of hypothesis as we have already found him condemn. But when he is aware of the absence of a purely psychical continuity — and at all events in those cases in which more metaphysical psychologists resorted to the hypothesis of "unconscious mental modifications"—he proposes a way out of the difficulty. He finds "unconscious modifications of the nerves" to be the only thinkable form of the "latent" process.[1]

This method of explaining the psychical result

[1] Examination of Hamilton, pp. 355-357.

involves conceptions of psychological explanation that might have meant more than they do for Mill's theory. If he had been less satisfied with the traditional assumptions of psychology, he might have made much more than he actually does of the relation of mental to organic states. In so far as he recognises the internal incompleteness of psychological analysis, he resorts, for its completion, to physiology; and in so doing, he makes use of factors that are no longer hypothetical but definitely real; for even when sensations, or rather impressions, are psychologically nothing, they are everything for physiology. Nothing can be more real than the transmission of nervous impressions from the periphery to the cerebral cortex. But in these real stages of the physiological process there is a positive continuity: in them we have to do with a discoverable causal series. Relation to the organic process is thus a quality of mental life in virtue of which it can be studied as a continuous whole. Nor, it may be suggested, is there anything arbitrary or strange about the fact that mental processes can be explained in this way. Our consciousness *is* in relation to

the physical process in question; and, since its existence and character belong to it in this relation, there is nothing singular in the necessity for interpreting it in the light of the physical process.[1] Relation to organic change is a real quality of mental life as we know it; and, if this be recognised, it cannot appear unreasonable that this quality should give to mental life whatever continuity it may have for our knowledge, or that the analysis of mental facts should be capable, through their real relation to organic states, of a completion that is not possible when they are regarded in an isolation which is, after all, fictitious and abstract.

Mill is too well satisfied with psychology, as he finds it, to recognise fully the dependence of its ultimate explanations upon physiology, or to see how largely "unconscious" factors contribute to every psychical result. But this certainly arises from no jealousy of the recognition of material conditions. On the contrary, once the reality and distinctiveness of mental facts have been admitted, he argues for the thorough concomi-

[1] Cf. Mr Bradley's Appearance and Reality, chap. xxiii., esp. pp. 337-342.

tance of mental and bodily states.[1] He points out that "if it be materialism to endeavour to ascertain the material conditions of our mental operations, all theories of the mind which have any pretension to comprehensiveness must be materialistic;"[2] and while he recognises that "the relation of thought to a material brain is no metaphysical necessity, but simply a constant co-existence within the limits of observation,"[3] he yet insists that the influence of physiological factors is "one of the most important departments of psychological study."[4] The development of Mill's psychological position issues in a thoroughgoing incorporation of man in nature, a conception of the laws of mind as possibly "derivative laws resulting from laws of animal life,"[5] and a definite assertion that mental life is related to material conditions within the organism.

[1] Essays on Religion, pp. 198 ff.

[2] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. iii. p. 109.

[3] Essays on Religion, p. 199.

[4] Logic, p. 556.

[5] Ibid.

CHAPTER VII

DETERMINISM

MILL'S naturalistic conception of human life appears more decisively in his deterministic view of activity than in any other part of his philosophy: determinism is, in fact, the main outcome of his inclusion of man in nature, and the central doctrine of his scientific theory of human thought and conduct.

Mill's interest in determinism is mainly logical. The doctrine is forced upon him by his objective treatment of man, and required as the presupposition of his attempt to construct a science of social relations. That his belief in it is brought about rather by logical than by ethical requirements is shown indirectly by the extent to which he qualifies his statement of it, by his emphatic assertion of the reality of choice and

volition; and no stronger evidence could be desired of the degree in which he was aware of the moral difficulties of the theory than his own account of his desire to evade it.[1]

The deterministic idea of human conduct belongs, in fact, to the manner of Mill's attempt to investigate human life: it simply expresses, for him, the view that man is a possible object of inductive study. Induction depends for its possibility upon the existence of causal relations, since it is essentially an inquiry into causes.[2]

[1] Autobiography, pp. 168 ff. "For example, during the later returns of my dejection, the doctrine of what is called Philosophical Necessity weighed on my existence like an incubus. I felt as if I was scientifically proved to be the helpless slave of antecedent circumstances; as if my character and that of all others had been formed for us by agencies beyond our control, and was wholly out of our own power. I often said to myself, what a relief it would be if I could disbelieve the doctrine of the formation of character by circumstances; and remembering the wish of Fox respecting the doctrine of resistance to governments, that it might never be forgotten by kings, nor remembered by subjects, I said that it would be a blessing if the doctrine of necessity could be believed by all *quoad* the characters of others, and disbelieved in regard to their own. I pondered painfully on the subject till gradually I saw light through it."

[2] Logic, pp. 247 and 369; Auguste Comte and Positivism, pp. 59 ff.

The existence of causal relations, therefore, in human personality, conditions the possibility of making an inductive study of man's conduct, and of knowing his life objectively. Determinism means for Mill, primarily, the existence of causal connection within personal human life, in the same sense in which it obtains in the world of external nature.[1] In the case of action it means that "a volition is a moral effect, which follows the corresponding moral causes as certainly and invariably as physical effects follow their physical causes."[2] In the case of knowledge (though Mill does not explicitly connect this with his determinism) it means that the associative sequence of ideas is invariable and unconditional. In either case, determinism may be taken to affirm simply an "abstract possibility of being foreseen,"[3] for every voluntary act, and every sequence of presentations. "Correctly conceived, the doctrine called Philosophical Necessity is simply this: that, given the motives which are present to an

[1] Logic, pp. 547 ff.; Examination of Hamilton, pp. 576 ff., and 603.

[2] Examination of Hamilton, p. 578.

[3] Ibid., p. 603.

individual's mind, and given likewise the character and disposition of the individual, the manner in which he will act may be unerringly inferred; that if we knew the person thoroughly, and knew all the inducements which are acting upon him, we could foretell his conduct with as much certainty as we can predict any physical event."[1]

This general conception of human personality as an orderly or causally connected complex simply expresses, as we have seen, the possibility of making it a subject of investigation. But besides this, and even apart from the question of man's relation to the external world, Mill's determinism contains a definite view of the nature of moral causation. "Those who say that the will follows the strongest motive, do not mean the motive which is strongest in relation to the will, or in other words, that the will follows what it does follow. They mean the motive which is strongest in relation to pain and pleasure; since a motive, being a desire or aversion, is proportional to the pleasantness, as conceived by us, of the thing desired, or the painfulness of the thing shunned."[2] The form of this statement is con-

[1] Logic, p. 547. [2] Examination of Hamilton, p. 605.

nected with Mill's psychological hedonism: it involves his doctrine of the relation of desire and pleasure. But this doctrine is not really essential to his determinism: his deterministic theory of volition turns less upon his view of the object of desire than upon his idea of the relation of desire to volition. That "will is the child of desire"[1] is really all that the theory needs to assert psychologically; and it is by this view of the causation of actions that Mill distinguishes his determinism from fatalism; since he maintains that, while a man's character is formed by his circumstances, "his own desire to mould it in a particular way is one of those circumstances, and by no means one of the least influential."[2]

Apart from certain individualistic assumptions, which do not necessarily belong to it, this aspect of Mill's determinism is simply a resolute assertion of the inner unity of the mental process: what he contends for is the real relation of acts of will to the whole mental life of the individual. This is the significance, for example, of his assertion that "the difference between a bad and a good man is not that the latter acts in opposition to his strong-

[1] Utilitarianism, p. 60. [2] Logic, p. 550.

est desires; it is that his desire to do right, and his aversion to doing wrong, are strong enough to overcome, and in the case of perfect virtue, to silence, any other desire or aversion which may conflict with them;"[1] and it is the ground of his statement that consciousness does not witness "that I could have chosen one course while I preferred the other"[2] of two alternatives. Mill does not conceive of the will as an isolated "faculty." He means by it nothing more than the facts of consciousness which are called volitions; and these are so dependent upon the whole conscious life of the agent that, while "I can indeed influence my own volitions . . . by the employment of appropriate means," "direct power over my volitions I am conscious of none."[3] Its dependence on other elements in consciousness is so integral to the volition itself, that it cannot be affected otherwise than through them.

Such a conception of the integrity of mental life is at the root of the idea of "character," which plays so large and useful a part in Mill's theory of conduct. Character he defines, with

[1] Examination of Hamilton, p. 585.
[2] Ibid., p. 582. [3] Ibid., p. 377.

Novalis, as "a completely fashioned will";[1] and it is in the light of this conception of character that Mill's determinism has its chief importance. Will "passes out of the dominion of its parent (desire) only to come under that of habit;"[2] and "a habit of willing is commonly called a purpose."[1] Purposes, or volitional habits, must be regarded, in this way, as the effect of volition; and it is in the formation of purposes not directly dependent on immediate inclinations that the development and confirmation of character consist. Character is thus the effect of past volitions; but it is, for Mill, no less the source than the product of voluntary conduct; and it is this interdependence of volition and character that gives his deterministic theory of will its main interest for him.

The connection in which Mill's most deliberate statement of his determinism occurs is in itself suggestive of the place of the theory in his philosophy. It forms the prelude to his discussion of the "Logic of the Moral Sciences,"[3] and is the basis of the contention "that there is or may be

[1] Logic, p. 552. [2] Utilitarianism, p. 60.
[3] Logic, book vi. chap. ii.

a science of human nature."[1] The significance of determinism consists in the fact that it is involved in every attempt to study human personality inductively, and is thus the only hypothesis on which Ethology—the science of character—can even be attempted. This makes it an essential presupposition of social science, the possibility of which Mill regards as bound up with that of Ethology. The use of the determinist theory, for Mill, thus consists in its being required to make Social Science legitimate.

In Mill's opinion, social science rests on Ethology. "Human beings in society have no properties but those which are derived from, and may be resolved into, the laws of the nature of individual man."[2] This is his reason for insisting, against Comte, on the necessity for Psychology. There can be no science of character that is not based upon observation of mental life; and without a science of character there can be no science of society. This emphasis on individual human nature as the explanation of social life is the key to Mill's conception of social science, and to his criticism of Comte's

[1] Logic, book vi. chap. iii. [2] Ibid., p. 573.

sociological attempt. The 'Politique Positive' is an account of the life and growth of society which abstracts, all but completely, from the fact that society consists of persons; and Mill asserts the importance of this omitted element. He demands, therefore, "a science of Ethology, founded on the laws of Psychology."[1] He contends that there are "universal laws of the Formation of Character,"[2] and that these are primarily psychological laws. He regards them also as the ultimate laws of social development.[3]

This assertion of the relation of Psychology to Social Science is really useful and important. Psychology forms an element in every science whose subject-matter is mental. Ethics, Politics, Æsthetics, and the Science of Religion, for example, are sciences of special relations of mind; and none of them can be dissociated from psychology, which is simply analysis of the mental function implied in them all. The complete development of any of these sciences involves an analysis, a cleared conception, of mental action itself: that is a psychology. Just as all natural sciences imply physics—an analytic statement

[1] Logic, p. 570. [2] Ibid., p. 564. [3] Ibid., pp. 595, 596.

of material relations as such—so do all spiritual sciences imply analysis of mental relations. No natural science can give a result, or assume a process, that contradicts the physical possibilities, or is irreducible to those processes in which physical change is found to consist. Similarly, no spiritual science can violate, by its results, the known modes of mental action—can represent mental processes as occurring in a manner inconsistent with what we know of mental function. Psychology is thus regulative of spiritual sciences as physics are of natural sciences; and this is the real meaning of Mill's contention that a psychological ethology is the necessary basis of social science. The absence of such a basis must mean, according to him, a social science which takes no heed of the individuals who make up society, and which is therefore unauthorised and insecure.

The possibility of a science of individual character is thus of no small importance to Mill's philosophy; and his belief in it is quite definite. He admits, indeed, that "there are reasons enough why the moral sciences must remain inferior to at least the more perfect of the phys-

ical: why the laws of their more complicated phenomena cannot be so completely deciphered, nor the phenomena predicted with the same degree of assurance."[1] But these reasons consist simply in the greater complexity of the phenomena with which the moral sciences have to do, and not in any abstract impossibility of knowing or investigating moral facts; so that, "though we cannot attain to so many truths, there is no reason that those we can attain should deserve less reliance, or have less of a scientific character."[2]

Mill's estimate of the accuracy which is possible for a science of human nature results, in fact, from his demand for a resolution of its empirical laws into the laws of the causes on which they depend. Because its explanations are of this derived kind, such a science cannot give a complete analysis of all the partial and limited influences by which character is affected: it will give an account of "the main phenomena, but not the perturbations."[3]

The degree of precision which Mill thinks attainable in a science of human nature connects itself in this way with the psychological char-

[1] Logic, p. 395. [2] Ibid. [3] Ibid., p. 554.

acter of the ultimate laws of such a science; and this degree of precision corresponds no less fully to the end for which the science is required. "Whenever it is sufficient to know how the great majority of the human race, or of some nation or class of persons, will think, feel, and act," the general propositions of ethology "are equivalent to universal ones. For the purposes of political and social science, this *is* sufficient," "that which is only probable when asserted of individual human beings indiscriminately selected, being certain when affirmed of the character and collective conduct of masses."[1] Mill is satisfied, in fact, with that degree of accuracy, in the science of character, which enables it to serve as a basis for Social Science.

It can hardly be denied that the project of a science of character, as Mill conceives it, is one which is beset with difficulties, and which it is not easy either to connect with psychology or to make use of in the study of social phenomena.[2] Apart, however, from the question how

[1] Logic, p. 554.

[2] Cf. an article by Mr Ward on "J. S. Mill's Science of Ethology," International Journal of Ethics, vol. i. p. 446.

far such a science is possible, or likely to be useful, Mill's demand for it has a twofold significance in his philosophy: it explains his interest in determinism; and it indicates his sense of the need for an interpretation of personal life. His belief in ethology also suggests a way of regarding personality which he actually adopts, when he comes to investigate the conditions of human development.

One of the most general and important problems of a science of character—a problem, too, the manner of whose solution affects the interpretation of determinism in the most vital way—is that of the relation of human character to the external world. Mill is emphatic in his assertion of man's dependence upon nature—of the ethical and economic significance of the external world of circumstance. He does not hesitate to affirm "that Nature is to the greater number a severer taskmaster even than man is to man."[1] Circumstances impose on man necessities that guide and form his life; and the conditions that affect him most are of natural and not human origin. This is a view of man's relation to

[1] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. i. p. 27.

nature which Mill develops in more than one instance.

His appreciation of Malthus's doctrine of population, for example, must be understood in this way. He regards the necessity for limiting population as due to natural rather than to social causes. "The niggardliness of nature, not the injustice of society, is the cause of the penalty attached to over-population":[1] it is because nature limits the productiveness of labour that population cannot increase indefinitely without harm. Man is, in fact, an organism, and subject, as all organisms must be, to the world from which he draws his life and supplies his needs. Production, Mill points out, is limited and determined by natural conditions. It is not arbitrary: its conditions are not fixed, and cannot be altered, by human will. Its possibility depends on the presence of natural resources: it is limited in its amount, and determined in its character, by these. Man must seek his livelihood from nature on terms that are of nature's fixing. An improvement of his powers, or a husbanding of his acquired resources, may increase his gains;

[1] Pol. Econ., p. 118.

but even to this nature sets limits. Man lives, as it were (a lesson that Mill learned from the Physiocrats), partly by the bounty of nature, which multiplies for him the results of his labour. The productiveness of labour depends upon nature, and is governed by laws that man cannot change.[1]

This is less true of the distribution than it is of the production of wealth; for the distribution of what nature yields is a matter in which man can to some extent choose and arrange, and its laws are "partly of human institution."[2] Here also, no doubt, there are necessities to be discerned; for the effects of "human institution" "are as much a subject of scientific inquiry as any of the physical laws of nature."[3] But the laws that determine the effects of distributive arrangements are laws of character itself; and Mill makes much of the distinction, between distributive arrangements, which man can regulate, and conditions of production, which are fixed, and with which he cannot interfere.[4]

This dependence of production upon natural

[1] Cf. Pol. Econ., pp. 13 ff., 63 ff., 264.
[2] Pol. Econ., p. 13.
[3] Ibid., p. 14.
[4] Ibid., p. 264.

conditions is of quite crucial importance; for nothing is more certain than the vast significance, in all human development, of the economic factor. No other condition exerts so much influence on the formation of character as the mode in which nature can be made to yield a livelihood. The economic significance of nature, as a factor in production, makes nature the greatest of ethical factors also. This is the main explanation of the influence on character of climatic and other natural conditions. In proportion as they compel and reward labour, by producing in response to it an improvement in comfort, they develop character, not simply in its economic utility, but in many other respects as well.[1]

Of more direct influences of the external world on character Mill is no less aware than of that which it exerts in virtue of its economic significance. He never tires of affirming "the extraordinary susceptibility of human nature to external influences,"[2] whether such influences are of human or of directly natural origin. The effects of pain, privation, occupation, and all the

[1] Cf. Pol. Econ., bk. i. c. vii.

[2] Subjection of Women, p. 40.

circumstances that belong to man's struggle with nature, and to the relations of social life, appear to him to be the determining forces that bring about changes of character.[1] Progress is not a law of human nature with Mill; he regards it as brought about by the force of circumstances; he conceives of man as forced forward by economic necessities, rather than by any essentially progressive tendency in himself.[2]

Moral ideas and feelings, no less than developments of character, appear to him to be the result of circumstances. "Laws and systems of polity always begin by recognising the relations they find already existing between individuals. They convert what was a mere physical fact into a legal right."[3] In this way Mill explains the sentiment of justice itself. In its retributive aspect, it is simply a developed expression of the natural feeling of retaliation: it is "a spontaneous outgrowth from two sentiments, both in the highest degree natural, and which either are or resemble

[1] Pol. Econ., bk. ii. c. xiii.; bk. v. c. viii.; and Essay on De Tocqueville, Dissertations and Discussions, vol. ii.

[2] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. ii. p. 71.

[3] Subjection of Women, p. 8.

instincts; the impulse of self-defence, and the feeling of sympathy."[1] It is thus of purely natural origin: it is an instinctive feeling; and the direction which it takes is determined by the form which circumstances give to the individual's relation to his fellows.

Suggestive as are these indirect evidences of Mill's tendency to exalt the power of nature over human character, we are yet not wholly dependent on them for our knowledge of his way of conceiving man's relation to the world. He expressly interprets thought and conduct as effects in man of the course of things.

This is the meaning of his emphasis on "the law of association as the governing principle, by means of which the more complex and recondite mental phenomena shape themselves, or are shaped out of the simpler mental elements."[2] He finds in Hartley's Associationism, for the first time, a real analysis of mental function;[3] and he accepts it as an account, not merely of the thinking process taken by itself, but also of the

[1] Utilitarianism, p. 76.

[2] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. iii. p. 108.

[3] Autobiography, p. 68.

relation of thought to the world. He states his father's "fundamental doctrine," in psychology, as "the formation of all human character by circumstances, through the Universal Principle of Association;"[1] and the place given to Association, by Mill, in conformity with the traditions of English Psychology, does, in fact, imply more than merely a causal connection within mental life, and a consequent possibility of investigating it. It implies, besides, the complete and direct subjection of the mental process to the course of external events. It means that consciousness is essentially passive, and merely receives and reproduces impressions from the outer world—that the order and connection of our ideas, no less than the elements which make up their complexity, come entirely from without. Such a view is not merely implied, but is even explicitly advanced by Mill. He says that "the conceptions . . . which we employ for the colligation and methodisation of facts, do not develop themselves from within, but are impressed upon the mind from without;"[2] and that "the conception is not furnished *by* the mind, until it has been furnished *to* the

[1] Autobiography, p. 108. [2] Logic, p. 427.

mind; and the facts which supply it are sometimes extraneous facts, but more often the very facts which we are attempting to arrange by it." [1]

How far this view of thought is consistent with other elements in Mill's philosophy is a question which we shall have to discuss at a later stage, when these elements come to be considered. But it constitutes an important part of his positivist or naturalistic theory of human life, and it leads directly to his idea of the formation of character. "Our character," he says, "is formed by us as well as for us; but the wish which induces us to attempt to form it is formed for us; and how? Not, in general, by our organisation, nor wholly by our education, but by our experience—experience of the painful consequences of the character we previously had." [2]

It is to be observed that this way of conceiving the relation of character to the outer world, while it is perhaps a natural sequel to the determinism which Mill required as a scientific postulate, is yet not necessarily implied in that theory. It is possible to believe that human character and experience are capable of analysis into con-

[1] Logic, p. 428. [2] Ibid., p. 550.

nected processes, and even that they are objectively related to the natural order of things, without thinking of them as directly and passively subject to the external world.[1] We shall see that the freedom of personal experience is suggested by Mill's own questions as to the finality of phenomenalist psychology; but his failure to develop this idea constructively, in his account of character and its conditions, leaves him, in his investigation of human experience, committed to the view that it is nothing more than an incident in the course of nature.

[1] Cf. James's Principles of Psychology, c. xxviii.

CHAPTER VIII

FREEDOM

We have seen that Mill's theory of knowledge, in some of its most important developments, contains a recognition of objective existence, such as his inherited sensationalism can hardly be said to justify: a reality which is not merely mental states is implied, in his theory of judgment, to be the object of knowledge; and this reality is definitely conceived, in his constructive logical theory, as a system of unconditional relations.

This idea of an objective world has for its correlative Mill's conception of a subject, or self, other than mere states of mind. The consciousness of objective reality involves the consciousness of a knowing subject; and the idea of objects as other than mere subjective states of individuals

makes it impossible to regard such states as the subject that knows. Mill does indeed affirm that "the Mind is only known to itself phenomenally, as the series of its feelings or consciousnesses,"[1] and that "the feelings or consciousnesses which belong or have belonged to it, and its possibilities of having more, are the only facts there are to be asserted of Self—the only positive attributes, except permanence, which we can ascribe to it."[2] But this does not prevent him from admitting the necessity for another conception of the Self.

The way is left open for such a conception by Mill's recognition of the phenomenal limits and incomplete character of all inductive explanation. "What is called explaining one law of nature by another," he tells us, "is but substituting one mystery for another, and does nothing to render the general course of nature other than mysterious: we can no more assign a *why* for the most extensive laws than for the partial ones;"[3] and the limitations of scientific theory are hardly less definitely expressed in his statement that no

[1] Examination of Hamilton, p. 263. [2] Ibid.
[3] Logic, p. 310.

mere summation of the actions of its elements "will ever amount to the action of the living body itself."[1] Such suggestions make it possible to maintain that the self is not completely expressed in mental states, while at the same time these states are regarded as all that can be known of it.

The recognition of a subject which is not simply states of consciousness is forced upon Mill by his assertion of the objectivity of knowledge; for experience only yields a knowledge of actual things in virtue of its inner continuity. A mere series or succession of unconnected mental states could never amount to a knowledge of objective reality; and Mill sees that the conception of mental life as such a series, which is the only one that the experienced facts yield, is inadequate to explain the essential objectivity of thought. He finds the empiricism, which is normal to the scientific problem, to be metaphysically incompetent. Experience explains everything but itself.

Mill does not, indeed, admit "that the mere impression on our senses involves or carries with

[1] Logic, p. 243.

it any consciousness of a Self."[1] But memory and expectation belong to all knowledge; they are essential to the objectivity which characterises it; without them, the phenomena of mind would be discontinuous, and there would be no knowledge of a world. Memory and expectation, therefore, must be explained by any theory which is really to give an account of knowledge; and it is thus a fact of real significance, that they "are attended with the peculiarity, that each of them involves a belief in more than its own present existence."[2] This characteristic of memory and expectation compels Mill to admit "that the mind, or *Ego*, is something different from any series of feelings, or possibilities of them,"[3] in order to escape "the paradox, that something which, *ex hypothesi*, is but a series of feelings, can be aware of itself as a series."[3] This is the ground of Mill's belief in a self. "In so far," he says, "as reference to an *Ego* is implied in Expectation I do postulate an *Ego*."[4] Memory and expectation involve a self which is not merely a series of phenomena: the dependence

[1] Examination of Hamilton, p. 262.
[2] Ibid., p. 247.
[3] Ibid., p. 248.
[4] Ibid., p. 258.

of knowledge on them is thus really equivalent to the relativity of things to a thinker.

For Mill, this necessity of a non-phenomenal self is merely "inexplicable"; and his inability to explain its relation to other elements in his theory of knowledge instances the inadequacy of his avowed logic to his real thinking. The admission is really "a trap-door opened by Mr Mill himself in the floor of his own philosophy."[1] But that Mill should have stumbled over the idea of a "subject," and should have been unable to reduce it to a series of "states of consciousness," is no mere personal accident or momentary weakness. For metaphysical empiricism, indeed, such a "subject" is a mere anomaly; but no consistent empirical philosophy would have admitted the necessity for it. From an empirical standpoint, this way of regarding knowledge seems a most needless lapse on Mill's part: Mr Bain, for example, "never could see where his difficulty lay."[2] But the idea of the "subject" belongs, in no external way, to Mill's

[1] Professor Masson's Recent British Philosophy, third ed., p. 215.

[2] Professor Bain's John Stuart Mill: A Criticism, p. 121.

theory of knowledge; and his recognition of "the organic union[1] . . . which connects the present consciousness with the past one"[2] is not an isolated *aperçu*, nor a mere exception in an otherwise consistent theory. Mill's guarded but undisguised admission of the necessity, for knowledge, of a subject, "different from any series of feelings, or possibilities of them,"[3] does not stand alone; it is simply the central and crucial instance of an element in his thinking which is exemplified in many other cases, whose practical importance, though not their logical significance, is perhaps greater than that of this conception. When Mill finds a "subject" to be involved in knowledge, and asserts "that there is something real in this tie, real as the sensations themselves, and not a mere product of the laws of thought without any fact corresponding to it,"[4] he is only developing, in relation to the subjective aspect of knowledge, a conception to which his theory of induction gives effect in relation to the

[1] A phrase which Mill accepted from Professor Masson's criticism of him; *vide* Recent British Philosophy, third ed., p. 213.

[2] Examination of Hamilton, p. 262.

[3] Ibid., p. 248.

[4] Ibid., p. 262.

world of known reality. His assertion of the unity and reality of the knowing subject connects itself with his view of knowledge as constructed out of judgments about things.

That Mill's idea of the self is vague and incoherent need hardly be insisted on, in view of his most modest pretensions in the matter. His suggestion that "mind may be described as the sentient *subject* (in the German sense of the term) of all feelings,"[1] indicates only too truly the slight and second-hand character of his acquaintance with German thought; and it is not difficult to suppose that, if he had made himself at home in German philosophy, as Sterling urged him to do,[2] he might have come to a clearer understanding with himself on this and other matters. He had little craving for system; and when the facts of life forced upon him ideas that did not tally with his theories, he accepted the results frankly enough, but he left them often unexplained. In the present instance, it may be suggested that his assertion

[1] In the earlier editions of the Logic, p. 68.

[2] Cf. Mr W. L. Courtney's Life of John Stuart Mill (Great Writers), p. 76.

of "something I call Myself"[1] is wiser than many pretentious theories; but it can hardly be maintained that this or any other of Mill's statements about the self can be made to convey a clear account of it. In point of fact, the self is genuinely "inexplicable" to him. However much it may be involved in his recognition of objective reality, he does not discover it as so involved. He may rather be said to stumble upon it unexpectedly; and his idea of it is proportionately negative and obscure. He thinks of it as a mere residue from psychological analysis—an element in the mental complex that cannot be resolved; his conception of it is psychological; and however far such a result may be from his intention, the idea of the self which he actually conveys is much more that of a "substance" than of a "subject." He is thus compelled to find in it not an explanation of things but a baffling and incomprehensible problem — an inexplicability added to the mystery of knowledge.

Now, the form of knowledge is certainly not "explicable" in the sense in which objects of

[1] Logic, p. 40.

knowledge are so; but neither is it at all relevant to speak of it, in Mill's way, as "inexplicable." There are excellent reasons for our inability to explain it as a separate or abstract fact; for even to demand such explanation of it is to misconstrue it altogether. Self-consciousness is the very term of all explanation; and all knowledge is in a certain sense of it as well as by it. But the attempt to know it in isolation is essentially unreasonable, since it is only real in experience; and to abstract it from the synthesis of knowledge, or to make it the unexplained residue of a merely subjective process, is to reduce it, and with it all reality, to a dead level of unreason. Mill's conception of the self as "inexplicable" is thus part of a confusion, which arises from his failure to conceive it as the subject of knowledge.

But if Mill's assertion of the dependence of knowledge upon a subject is not made in such a way as to do justice to all the issues that are involved in it, we may still regard it as part of a theory of experience which forms a highly suggestive correction of his deterministic account of man's relation to the world.

The connection is not far to seek between the

discovery that self-hood, or personality, is the basis of all knowledge, and Mill's recognition of the part which emotional interest plays in the construction of experience. As Volkmann says,[1] "Everything interests me of which I can say I am in it." Interest expresses the relation of its object to the needs of personal life; and it is therefore significant of Mill's emphasis upon the personal element in experience that he makes much of subjective interest in his account of the development of knowledge. Interest, for example, promotes that synthesis which is the main element in knowledge: we know things as wholes, and not in their mere details, because "in our perceptions of objects, it is generally the wholes, and the wholes alone, that interest us."[2] In the same way pleasure and pain are referred to the subject rather than to the object, because their interest is mainly subjective; because they are of comparatively little importance to us as qualities of the objective world of things, and

[1] Lehrbuch der Psychologie, third ed., vol. ii. p. 203; quoted by Professor Baldwin in his Handbook of Psychology: Feeling and Will, p. 148.

[2] Examination of Hamilton, p. 325.

interest us primarily as elements in conscious life.[1] In its more developed stages, too, experience depends for its coherence upon the existence of emotional interest: a capacity of feeling is required in order that there may be a motive for the pursuit of truth.[2] The effort to know things depends upon a sense of their importance—upon the interest which their relations possess for us.

The same sense of the inner unity of personal life, and of the dependence of experience upon this unity, is expressed in Mill's assertion of the relation of activity to the growth of knowledge. The fundamental position, for example, which he assigns to experiences of resistance in his derivation of our conception of matter,[3] makes activity an essential element in the consciousness of an outer world; for "resistance is only another name for a sensation of our muscular frame, combined with one of touch;"[3] but this recognition of a mere contribution, however important, which experiences of activity make to our knowledge of

[1] Examination of Hamilton, p. 268.

[2] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. i. p. 92.

[3] Examination of Hamilton, p. 270.

reality, is of subordinate interest, compared with Mill's admission of the active character of experience itself. This is an idea which does not affect, in any vital way, Mill's own systematic treatment of psychological problems; and he regards it as a new development of empirical psychology, when Mr Bain affirms the essentially active character of conscious life. Still, it is a development of doctrine which he welcomes with real cordiality, and which he regards as not only true but also of the highest importance. "The mind," he says, "is active as well as passive; and the apparent insufficiency of the theory to account for the mind's activity, is probably the circumstance which has oftenest operated to alienate from the Association Psychology any of those who had really studied it."[1] This is an account of mental life which can hardly be combined in any organic way with that complete subjection of thought to things which Mill elsewhere asserts.[2] To make experience an activity—an expression of personality—is to abolish the direct causal relation between out-

[1] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. iii. p. 120.

[2] Cf. chapter vii.

ward things and the knowledge which experience gives; for if experience is an activity, and is formed and characterised by the personal life which makes it real, then it is no longer possible to regard its results as due to mere unknown things. Things only affect the growth of experience as they become objects of knowledge; but objects of knowledge are characterised by their relation to the activity of the knowing self; and this essential element in their very being is left out of account when knowledge is regarded as simply an effect of things. The relation of personal activity to the world of fact need not be denied: man's hereditary continuity with nature is a matter which does not really concern us in this connection. Every material element in personality has, no doubt, its conditions in the world of impersonal existence; but to call personality an effect of these conditions is still irrelevant and impossible. For, after all has been said, an essential characteristic of personal activity is self-consciousness; and to call self-consciousness an effect of anything is to use words without meaning. Thought is thus no mere effect of things. The activity of experience

—its dependence upon the constructive action of personal life—is, in fact, only another name for the dependence of knowledge upon a subject: it means that self-consciousness cannot be ignored in giving an account of the ideas of things which experience yields us.

Mill's failure to embody his belief in the activity of experience in a systematic theory, does not mean that this belief is without effect in his way of conceiving human knowledge and conduct. That sense of the reality and significance of personal life, which appears in his defence of introspective psychology, betrays itself in various other ways.

His vindication of the worth of hypothesis in scientific investigation suggests the extent to which his conception of scientific method is affected by his belief in the importance of intellectual motives and interests: he regards voluntary thought as essential to the development of knowledge by investigation.[1]

But a more crucial instance of his recognition of personality is his estimate of the nature and importance of voluntary choice. He asserts the

[1] Logic, p. 326.

reality of choice in the most definite way. Belief in it is, in fact, a necessity of that moral interest which determines his philosophical work.[1] He seems to miss the idea of it in deterministic theories; and he suggests that "the freewill doctrine, by keeping in view precisely that portion of the truth which the word Necessity puts out of sight, namely, the power of the mind to co-operate in the formation of its own character, has given to its adherents a practical feeling much nearer to the truth than has generally (I believe) existed in the minds of Necessitarians."[2] Choice is, to begin with, a genuine fact of psychic life; and it is a mental function which is of central, and not merely accidental, importance. "The human faculties of perception, judgment, discriminative feeling, mental activity, and even moral preference, are exercised only in making a choice."[3] Conscious life is, in fact, summed up in the act of choice: it expresses not simply a part, but the whole, of the mental activity of the individual. In it, and in it alone, his mental life becomes effective: it is the ultimate expression

[1] Autobiography, p. 169. [2] Logic, p. 551.
[3] Liberty, p. 34.

of that life, and the denial of it would amount to a dissolution of personality.

But choice is not only itself real. It is also a factor in the formation of character; and "what is really inspiriting and ennobling in the doctrine of freewill, is the conviction that we have real power over the formation of our own character; that our will, by influencing some of our circumstances, can modify our future habits or capabilities of willing."[1] This is really the important issue for Mill. His interest in the question is a practical one. He is beset with the difficulty "of thinking one doctrine true, and the contrary doctrine morally beneficial";[2] and he requires a solution which will satisfy the demands of both theory and practice. His statement of the reality and effectiveness of choice must be made in such a way as not to contradict his naturalistic conception of human action as part of the causally connected order of events; and his assertion of the absolute correlation of conduct and character makes this difficult, since it is not open to him to suggest either that the act of choice may be independent of the character

[1] Autobiography, p. 169. [2] Ibid., p. 170.

of the agent, or that that character is itself independent of the causal order.

In face of such perplexities, Mill affirms that the fact of a man's character "being, in the ultimate resort, formed for him, is not inconsistent with its being, in part, formed by him as one of the intermediate agents"; [1] and he points out that, although character is formed by circumstances, "desire to mould it in a particular way is one of these circumstances, and by no means one of the least influential." [1] This is all that seems to him to be required as a vindication of moral freedom: "this feeling, of our being able to modify our own character *if we wish,* is itself the feeling of moral freedom which we are conscious of. A person feels morally free who feels that his habits or his temptations are not his masters, but he theirs." [1] What Mill argues for, in fact, is the freedom of character itself, against particular impulses and passions. The unity of character, and the possibility of its being in its entirety the source of action, is what he means by moral freedom.

It is not to be expected that such a conception

[1] Logic, p. 550.

of freedom will satisfy those who insist that the possibility of moral life depends upon a freedom of the self and of action from or against the actual character, in which Mill finds the explanation of conduct. On the other hand, it must be remembered that those who separate the self from character, in this way, are apt to "go out for wool and come home shorn"; for, after all, much more depends morally upon the unity of conduct and character than upon the freedom of a psychological abstraction. There is little gain in such freedom, and much loss; for to make self-conscious action in any degree independent of character is to make self-consciousness and character separate things; and this abstract separation of self-consciousness from character leaves character impersonal and mechanical. But to sacrifice the idea of the freedom of character itself is to pay too dearly for the conviction that action is rendered incalculable by the presence of a "surd." Mill's assertion of the determination of conduct by character is an element of strength in his theory; and he is saved from many of the difficulties of determinism by his recognition of

the part which volition plays in the formation of character itself.

On the other hand, it must be admitted that Mill is not in a position to express, in any adequate way, that freedom which moral experience demands. He is left amid the antinomies of determinism and indeterminism, because his conception of the self is inadequate and irrelevant. His idea of the self, or subject, is arrived at, as we have seen, simply by his failure to analyse the subjective process of knowing, and not in relation to the objective synthesis, which constitutes knowledge. The idea is thus a psychological one; and, in so far as it is positive, it is little better than that notion of the self which Hume had failed to find any impression to justify. Self-consciousness is, indeed, more than this for Mill; but his idea of it is never free from traces of its psychological origin. It remains for him an object, rather than the very condition, of experience; and it is therefore conceived as separate from character, and so capable of being brought into antagonism with it and subjection to it. In so far as his idea of self-consciousness is vitiated in this way, Mill's theory of volition is a mere

determinism: it must inevitably make self-consciousness, and voluntary action, an effect of alien things. This separation of the self from character, which is common to Mill with some of his opponents and critics, makes freedom, in any worthy sense, impossible. It is at the root of Mill's curious denial of the possibility of altering character by direct volition. "We are exactly as capable," he says, "of making our own character, *if we will*, as others are of making it for us."[1] A man can only change his character, in fact, by changing his circumstances: this is all his power over his own development. He can only alter his character in the same sense, and in the same degree, in which other people can alter it.

Such a view of the way in which character is changed betrays an abstract and mechanical conception of it; and it ignores the fact that the will to be different is itself a change of character—that character is modified from within, by the volitions which express it. The very idea of character is apt, in truth, to be a misleading abstraction. In speaking of character, we abstract from self-consciousness: we leave out of account

[1] Logic, p. 550.

the fact that those actions which we ascribe to character are self-conscious. But to do this is to omit the most significant element in the case. The real agent is not character, taken in abstraction from the self-consciousness which is its most distinctive quality: such character is, in truth, a mere hypothesis, which neither exists nor acts. The real agent in human conduct is personal—character which is self-conscious, or self-consciousness which is realised and individualised in the detail of character. Neither an abstract self apart from character, nor an equally abstract character apart from self-consciousness, is an actual or complete personality; and to make either of these abstractions the source of conduct is to separate action from its real conditions. Mill's idea of character undoubtedly tends to leave out of account the self-consciousness which makes it human and personal; and his derivation of conduct from this impersonally conceived character makes freedom an impossible idea for him. He does not conceive action in such a way that it cannot be made the effect of impersonal causes; and he does not conceive human personality in such a way that its self-

development is possible. But these are the very essentials of freedom. Negatively and positively, it must be so conceived. It must mean absence of external or alien causation; and it must mean the possibility of self-development.

Mill's assertion of choice, and its effect upon character, is thus not made in such a way as to constitute a theory of freedom. It indicates only a dissatisfaction with determinism, which arises from his consciousness of personal life and its issues. The intensity of that consciousness is attested by Mill's effort to conceive action as free, and to regard character as self-determined. His failure in these respects suggests the real incompatibility of moral freedom with his philosophical presuppositions, and especially with his idea of self-consciousness.

But however unable Mill may be to express his conviction of moral freedom in a consistent theory, his assertion of it is no mere compromise or weakness on his part. It is not an isolated concession to custom or prejudice; it belongs to his mental habit, and connects itself with important elements in his theory of human life.

In economics, for example, Mill insists on the

actual effectiveness of human character and choice. He distinguishes sharply between production and distribution, on the ground that, while production is determined by natural agencies and circumstances, distribution is "a matter of human institution solely." "The rules by which it is determined, are what the opinions and feelings of the ruling portion of the community make them, and are very different in different ages and countries; and might be still more different, if mankind so chose."[1] This determination of distribution by human will makes choice a vitally important factor in economic conditions; and the central position which Mill gives in this way to choice and character, is further asserted in his qualification of his naturalistic account of production. While he adheres to that account in its main outlines, he modifies it by affirming the dependence of production upon character and thought. "No limit," he says, "can be set to the importance, even in a purely productive and material point of view, of mere thought."[2] Intellectual work, mere speculation itself, is productive labour.[3] Mental

[1] Political Economy, p. 123. [2] Ibid., p. 27. [3] Ibid.

and moral qualities are required for production, and both its nature and its amount depend on them.[1] The growth of knowledge is a development of man's power over nature; and the limitless possibilities of discovery afford the prospect of an equally unbounded development of productive industry.[2] Productiveness depends, too, upon the "energy of labour"; and this is conditioned by the presence of wants and ambitions fitted to call it forth.[3] The education and development of human character is thus, in the fullest sense, a productive industry: it is an indirect, but most real, contribution to the increase of material wealth.[4]

Still more definitely does character condition the right use of wealth when it is produced: the main hope of economic wellbeing lies in the education of feeling and opinion and the growth of self-restraint. The Standard of Comfort, which determines the distribution and consumption of wealth, depends for its maintenance and development upon self-restraint, and upon the education of impulses and wants. It represents, really, the

[1] Political Economy, pp. 115, 116.
[2] Ibid., p. 422.
[3] Ibid., p. 65.
[4] Ibid., pp. 25, 26.

economic effect of character. While external causes may raise it for a time, the level at which it is maintained must always depend upon mental and moral qualities.

This conviction of the economic significance of character is the ground of Mill's strenuous assertion of the necessity for education as the only means to social wellbeing. His belief in democracy gives way, in some degree, to grave apprehensions of "the ignorance and especially the selfishness and brutality of the mass."[1] He sees clearly that all social transformation requires "an equivalent change of character,"[2] and that "the primary and perennial sources of all social evil are ignorance and want of culture."[3] Self-dependence and self-protection form the only security of human beings;[4] and "the wellbeing of a people must exist by means of the justice and self-government, the *δικαιοσύνη* and *σωφροσύνη*, of the individual citizens."[5] "The laws of national (or collective) character are by far the

[1] Autobiography, p. 231. [2] Ibid., p. 232.
[3] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. i. p. 28.
[4] Representative Government, p. 55.
[5] Political Economy, p. 458.

most important class of sociological laws,"[1] not only on account of their direct interest, but also because it is character that mainly determines other conditions and guides the development of society.

In a like spirit, Mill finds the cause of social development in the growth of thought. "As between any given state of speculation," he says, "and the correlative state of everything else, it was almost always the former which first showed itself; though the effects, no doubt, reacted potently upon the cause."[2] In spite of its relative weakness, intellectual activity is the mainspring of progress. In it alone man frees himself from the incubus of the past and the present. It determines moral and physical conditions;[2] and its development "is at the root of all the great changes in human affairs."[3] Thought is, in fact, man's chief qualification for progress, because in it he "knows the end from the beginning," and sees the goal of effort. It emancipates him from his past: it makes the present a means to his ends. His

[1] Logic, p. 590. [2] Ibid., p. 605.
[3] Auguste Comte and Positivism, p. 104.

active life is liberated by it from habit and routine, and set free to adapt its effort to new needs. This simple and straightforward faith in the worth and weight of ideas is no small part of Mill's heritage from the intellectualism of the eighteenth century. The men of that clear-headed and cold-hearted time had a faith in knowledge and enlightenment for which no esteem can ever be too high; and, even when he forsakes their results, Mill holds by this faith which he received from them. It is the permanent faith of all philosophy—belief in ideas.

It is part of this belief in the worth of thought that Mill makes much of individual initiative and incentive in all reform.[1] Because all improvement depends upon ideas, it must come from individuals; and the most real and secure improvement — that of men themselves — consists in their adoption of new and better ways of thinking.

Personality is thus, for Mill, the very centre of human affairs. Human progress depends, not only upon natural conditions, but still more upon

[1] Cf. Liberty, p. 39, &c.; Dissertations and Discussions, vol. ii. pp. 72 ff.

choice, and thought, and character, and qualities of personal life. If Mill is committed by his presuppositions to another way of conceiving man's relation to the world, yet this assertion of the fundamental importance of personality forces itself through his empiricism, and modifies the strictness of his theory.

CHAPTER IX

ETHICAL HEDONISM

Both the strength and the weakness of Mill's idea of conduct appear in his theory of its moral aspect.

It is because conduct consists of acts of personal choice that it is possible to subject it to a moral criterion, and so to form judgments of moral value; and Mill's assertion of the volitional aspect of conduct—its relation to self-consciousness—makes ethics possible for him. He estimates conduct and character, not simply in respect of their effect on human happiness, as any other facts or events can be estimated, but also in relation to the self-consciousness of the agent; and he is able to take this moral view of conduct, because his assertion of choice, and its

relation to character, affirms a real connection between conduct and personality. Moral judgment, with the feelings that are appropriate to it, depends upon this personal aspect of conduct, for it constitutes an application to actions of a standard which the agent himself is assumed to be capable of recognising and applying; and this means that moral judgment must assume that a personal or self-conscious being is the cause or source of the actions judged, since only a self-conscious being could recognise the application of an ideal standard. Mill's moral criticism of conduct is thus relevant in virtue of that actual relation of conduct to self-consciousness which is asserted in his emphasis upon voluntary choice.

On the other hand, Mill's deterministic abstraction of character from self-consciousness makes the end or standard by which conduct is judged external to conduct itself. His misleading conception of self-consciousness separates it from character; and, because he regards character as the source of conduct, he is unable to give any coherent expression to that relation of self-consciousness to conduct which he asserts or requires in his doctrine of volition. Conduct is thus not

determined by self-conscious personality: its whole explanation is in character, which is conceived impersonally. But the worth of conduct, as Mill conceives it, is relative to personal thought and desire; and the end which conduct ought to realise thus stands in no real or vital relation to conduct itself.

Conduct and character, taken in this fictitious isolation from self-consciousness, are in no sense ends: they are only means to an end, which does not belong to them in any vital way, and to which they stand in a merely external relation. "Questions about ends are," as Mill says,[1] "in other words, questions what things are desirable;" ends are thus essentially determined by self-consciousness; and the separation of the source of conduct from self-consciousness is, consequently, an exclusion of acts from the end in relation to which they are judged. The relation of the moral end to action is thus external or contingent: the end becomes simply an effect upon feeling, and cannot be realised in the acts themselves. Such is the connection between hedonism and a psychological idea of self-consciousness, through the

[1] Utilitarianism, p. 52.

impersonal conception of character to which that idea leads.

The explicit ground of Mill's hedonistic ethics is "that happiness is desirable, and the only thing desirable, as an end; all other things being only desirable as means to that end."[1] His proof of this depends on his doctrine that only pleasure is desired; and that doctrine combines with his abstract conception of character to determine his acceptance of a hedonistic criterion. Mill points out, indeed, that "questions of ultimate ends are not amenable to direct proof;"[2] and he does not affect to give a demonstration of hedonism. But he also recognises that "there is a larger meaning of the word proof, in which this question is as amenable to it as any other of the disputed questions of philosophy."[2] "Considerations may be presented capable of determining the intellect either to give or withhold its assent to the doctrine; and this is equivalent to proof."[3] The ground of Mill's hedonistic conception of the moral end is not an intuition,[2] but consists in his theory of desire — the doctrine of psychological hedonism. "The only proof capable of being

[1] Utilitarianism, p. 52. [2] Ibid., p. 6. [3] Ibid., p. 7.

given that an object is visible, is that people actually see it. The only proof that a sound is audible, is that people hear it: and so of the other sources of our experience. In like manner, I apprehend, the sole evidence it is possible to produce that anything is desirable, is that people do actually desire it. If the end which the utilitarian doctrine proposes to itself were not, in theory and in practice, acknowledged to be an end, nothing could ever convince any person that it was so. No reason can be given why the general happiness is desirable, except that each person, so far as he believes it to be attainable, desires his own happiness. This, however, being a fact, we have not only all the proof which the case admits of, but all which it is possible to require, that happiness is a good: that each person's happiness is a good to that person, and the general happiness, therefore, a good to the aggregate of all persons."[1] This claim that happiness is one of the ends of conduct is transformed by psychological analysis into the statement, "that there is in reality nothing desired except happiness. Whatever is desired otherwise than as a

[1] Utilitarianism, pp. 52, 53.

means to some end beyond itself, and ultimately to happiness, is desired as itself a part of happiness, and is not desired for itself until it has become so."[1]

We need not pause, meantime, to examine the validity of Mill's transition, in the above passages, from private to general happiness. What we have to note is, that the only real proof of his Utilitarianism is the doctrine that pleasure is the sole object of desire; and that his ethical theory is thus governed by his psychological presuppositions.

It is not to be denied that Hedonism emphasises a real aspect of moral good. In making the end of conduct consist essentially in satisfaction, it affirms a genuine characteristic of it; for a good which is not a satisfaction of desire is quite unintelligible; and such a good, if we suppose it to be possible, could not, at all events, be a moral ideal or end. The objectivity of moral judgments involves the authority of the end or law which they apply to conduct; and this means that the moral end must be realisable in and by acts of will; for if it is not realisable, it cannot be binding or obliga-

[1] Utilitarianism, p. 57.

tory; and to be realisable means here to be realisable in acts of will, since these are the subject of moral judgment. The moral end, then, must be capable of being willed: it must be a possible object of desire; for it can only be realised by being willed and desired. The moral end must be adapted to the nature of man; for it is a "human good," and must be so conceived as to be capable of realisation in the facts of human character. If the moral consciousness is not to be an impossible, and therefore unauthoritative, demand, its *dicta* must be relative to the human possibilities. Moral rightness is that particular end or good which human actions are intrinsically capable of realising. Satisfaction is thus a necessary element in moral good; and, in asserting this, Hedonism calls attention to a characteristic of the moral end which is of real significance.

On the other hand, while the interpretation of the moral end as personal happiness emphasises an aspect of moral experience which ethical theory cannot afford to ignore, it is also true that the assertion of this aspect is apt to be made in a one-sided way. In so far as the hedonistic theory of morality is based upon the doctrine

that pleasure or happiness is the sole object of desire, it expresses an abstract or individualistic conception of personality. That desire is for things which are expected to produce pleasure may perhaps be accepted as a summary statement of certain characteristics of desire regarded as a mental fact. But, apart altogether from the question of the completeness or validity of such a statement, taken in a purely psychological sense, to derive from it a theory of the moral end is to make a constructive use of the abstract point of view required for psychology, in a domain to which it is quite inapplicable. The laws of mental life cannot, indeed, be ignored in forming a theory of the moral end, for that end must be realised by mental life; and it must not, therefore, be conceived in such a way as to make its realisation inconsistent with what is known of mental processes. The psychological results cannot be left out of account: morality must be conceived in accordance with them. But the function of the psychology of conduct, in relation to a theory of the moral end, is purely regulative: it cannot be made to determine the end positively, as it does when a direct passage is made from the

psychological formula that desire is for pleasure to a hedonistic theory of the moral end. To make the formula of psychological hedonism determine the moral point of view is to introduce into ethics an individualistic way of thinking, which is essential and proper to psychology, but which is irrelevant to the theory of morality, because it deliberately leaves out of account those relations to things and persons in which alone morality can exist.

Mill's idea of conduct is based on his psychological conception of knowledge and desire: it is derived from his limitation of consciousness to its own states. His theory of desire depends upon an isolation of personal life from the real world; and the abstraction of the subjective process from reality, in which his doctrine of conduct is thus rooted, betrays itself in the ethical consequences of the doctrine. The formal statement that desire is always for pleasure or happiness ignores all the particular interests and objects by which desire is actually determined and characterised. It thus makes possible no distinction between actions on their inner or conscious side: in respect of their motive they all become alike and morally

indifferent. Mill does actually recognise a variety of motives; but this recognition avowedly counts for nothing in his criticism of conduct. Motives only acquire ethical importance for him, by a separation of character from conduct, which is contrary to his own better judgment in the matter: they affect the moral worth of the agent, but not the morality of his actions.[1] Now this purely external conception of the worth of conduct—this refusal to judge it otherwise than by its outward results—is an obvious and direct consequence of the attempt to base ethics upon the formula that pleasure is the sole object of desire. The conception of desire which makes a state of personal feeling its only possible object can have no ethical meaning but this. It separates conduct from its end, and makes the end a merely external effect.

Even within the limits of his hedonism, Mill finds that this external conception of the relation of conduct to its end issues in a dissolution of practical life. One of his most searching discoveries, in the time of his doubt and distress, was the fatuity of the quest of personal happi-

[1] Utilitarianism, p. 26.

ness. "Those only are happy (I thought) who have their minds fixed on some object other than their own happiness; on the happiness of others, on the improvement of mankind, even on some art or pursuit, followed not as a means, but as itself an ideal end."[1] If only for its own sake, happiness must be allowed to come unsought. Those who aim at something else "find happiness by the way;"[1] but when it is sought it is not found. "The conscious ability to do without happiness gives the best prospect of realising such happiness as is attainable."[2] That such admissions as these are a surrender of the doctrine that only happiness can be desired, is a point on which it is hardly needful to insist. It is more interesting to observe that they are a powerful commentary upon Mill's ethical theory. Moral life ceases to be a unity for him, because he separates means and end in it, and makes the standard of conduct a mere outward consequence. We have just seen that Mill's failure to make the inner aspect of conduct morally significant leads him to ignore that relation of conduct and character which it had

[1] Autobiography, p. 142. [2] Utilitarianism, p. 23.

been his strength and excellence to assert. This abstraction from each other of related elements in the unity of moral life finds a fitting sequel in the conclusion to which Mill is driven, when he asserts that the ideal end which action must realise can never be made its motive. The external character of the relation between action and its end or criterion makes practical life unreasonable.

Such difficulties as these belong to the inconsistency of the elements in Mill's theory of action. If he had adopted a consistent deterministic account of conduct, and had been satisfied with such external criticism of it as determinism makes possible, his perplexities need never have occurred. They are the outcome of his attempt to fuse the ethical consequences of his mechanical theory of conduct with a criticism of action which implies its relation to self-consciousness. We have seen that Mill's attempt to reconcile his assertion of voluntary choice with his determinism is beset with difficulties; but these difficulties are greatly complicated and intensified when he tries to combine not simply his divergent ideas of conduct, but the ethical conceptions that grow out of them.

This constitutes the dramatic and speculative interest of Mill's ethical theory. It is an attempt to find, within the limits of empiricism, a place for naïve and undistorted moral experience; and Mill is distinguished from his empiricist predecessors by the serious and resolute nature of this attempt: he recognises the moral facts as they had failed to do. Mill's Utilitarianism might, in fact, almost be signalised as a return of modern hedonism to the ethical point of view. It is something of a concession to regard Benthamism as a theory of "Morals"; it is a theory of nearly everything in morals except the distinctively moral element; and Bentham's empiricist predecessors, though some of them were more theologically minded than he, were really no nearer to the ethical conception of conduct. With Mill this is changed, and we have a real attempt to express the results of moral experience. He is not satisfied with a discovery of the means by which each individual's attempt to secure his own happiness, in the present or in a future life, may be turned to account for the general good. He attaches much more importance than previous hedonism had done to the internal sanctions of conduct—to the estab-

lishment of a relation between the hedonistic end and the desires of the individual. We shall have to see, at a later stage, in what directions Mill's Utilitarianism is modified by his attempt to make out a real identity of private with general interest. But, in so far as his theory of the moral end consists in making it simply the satisfaction of actual desire, or the production of pleasant feeling, his main difficulties in working out that theory arise from his attempt to combine with it the idea of a less external relation between conduct and its criterion.

Mill makes utility a really moral principle. He affirms that "the principle of utility either has, or there is no reason why it might not have, all the sanctions which belong to any other system of morals."[1] His main effort, indeed, is to clear it from the charge of selfishness, and to idealise it by connecting it with man's whole spiritual meaning. He insists on the prominent place which may be assigned, on purely utilitarian grounds, to virtuous conduct. The utilitarian doctrine, he says, "maintains not only that virtue is to be desired, but that it is to be

[1] Utilitarianism, p. 40.

desired disinterestedly, for itself;"[1] and the utilitarian standard "enjoins and requires the cultivation of the love of virtue up to the greatest strength possible, as being above all things important to the general happiness."[2] The hedonism of Mill's ethical theory does not, in fact, express moral laxity or selfishness: the theory is conceived in no spirit of concession to self-regard or human weakness.

Mill's education had been the work of a stern schoolmaster. What we know of James Mill makes it very credible "that his moral teaching was not likely to err on the side of laxity or indulgence:"[3] we learn that "his moral feelings were energetic and rigid on all points which he deemed important to human wellbeing;"[4] and that his "moral inculcations were at all times mainly those of the '*Socratici viri*'; justice, temperance (to which he gave a very extended application), veracity, perseverance, readiness to encounter pain and especially labour; regard for the public good; estimation of persons according to their merits, and of things according to their

[1] Utilitarianism, p. 54.
[2] Ibid., p. 57.
[3] Autobiography, p. 51.
[4] Ibid., p. 107.

intrinsic usefulness; a life of exertion in contradistinction to one of self-indulgent ease and sloth."[1]

It would have been surprising if Mill, brought up on such ethical doctrine as this, had relapsed into a theory of morals conceived in a less arduous spirit; for all the newer influences of his youth, and his growing sympathy with the idealism of some of his contemporaries, could only serve to intensify his appreciation of the serious side of life. There is nothing which should lead us to expect in his hedonism any failure to do justice to the claims of morality or of social relations; and, in point of fact, the most obvious moral quality of the theory is its emphasis upon benevolence. In its assertion of the obligation of justice, and in its demand for reasonable self-sacrifice, Mill's Utilitarianism shows no lack of moral sinew—betrays no weakness or frigidity of moral motive.

Nor, again, is the hedonistic cast of the theory to be explained by any kind of sensuousness in Mill, or in those from whom he learned his ethics. In such men as Bentham and James Mill there

[1] Autobiography, p. 47.

is little enough of the "artistic temperament"; and the art of enjoyment is one in which Mill finds himself fatally lacking.[1] From such men the real temper of hedonism is conspicuously absent. Theirs is not the mood of the epicure. Love of pleasure is, at all events, not their besetting sin. They are reflective rather than sensitive; and there is in them more of the sage than of the voluptuary. Hedonism, in any ordinary sense of the term, sits strangely enough upon such men as these; and Mill's hedonism is not such as can reasonably be ascribed to any constitutional overestimate of even the most refined indulgences.

The philanthropic or humanitarian bent of his mind had probably much more to do with Mill's hedonism than any enthusiastic personal appreciation of pleasure. This is a real element in his outlook upon life. He is, above all things, interested in human wellbeing; and his emphasis on happiness connects itself, undoubtedly, with this side of his character. The most obvious evils of human life are its dulness and its misery; and no normally constituted and sympathetic observer

[1] Autobiography, p. 143.

can fail to see in these, and especially in the actual pains that men undergo, the most clamant wrongs that await redress. The saint and the prophet may perceive, with truer insight, that a more real tragedy is the failure of life from within —the weakness that consents to evil, the cowardice that courts defeat, the selfishness that separates every man from his neighbour. But the needless pain and sorrow of mankind are more visible evils; and there has been no real philanthropy that has not been alive to their presence, and urgent for their removal. Mill's consciousness of them colours all his thought about human conduct. When he insists that "the greatest happiness of the greatest number" is the criterion of morality, he is the spokesman of those to whom life brings too much pain. In their behalf he affirms the equal rights of all human beings; and it is the spectacle of their misery that makes his claim seem valid and needful. If Mill's utilitarianism has been of more real and direct service, in its effect upon social ideals and practice, than other, and perhaps more accurate, ethical theories, it has only fulfilled, in this, his main intention. It derives its character from his sympathy with

the pains of humanity: his hedonism is rooted in moral and humane interests.

Mill himself, in his review of Whewell's ethical writings, asserts, in the most unqualified way, his belief in the moral validity of his own theory. "We are as much for conscience, duty, rectitude," he says, "as Dr Whewell. The terms, and all the feelings connected with them, are as much a part of the ethics of utility as of that of intuition. The point in dispute is, what acts are the proper object of those feelings; whether we ought to take the feelings as we find them, as accident or design has made them, or whether the tendency of actions to promote happiness affords a test to which the feelings of morality should conform."[1]

In this passage, however, it is to be observed that Mill makes more of the logical than of the ethical aspect of the principle of utility; and it is beyond doubt that his acceptance of this principle was mainly determined, at all events in the first instance, by his sense of its logical usefulness. "My zeal," he says, speaking of his early Benthamism, "was as yet little else, at that period of my life, than zeal for speculative opinions. It

[1] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. ii. p. 459.

had not its root in genuine benevolence, or sympathy with mankind; though these qualities held their due place in my ethical standard."[1] The logical unity, or coherence, of the utilitarian theory was what first commended it to Mill. He saw men's moral judgments determined by traditions, caprices, and prejudices; and he desired to substitute for these a logic of practice. He criticises Whewell's 'Elements of Morality' as "nothing better than a classification and systematizing of the opinions which he found prevailing, among those who had been educated according to the approved methods of his own country; or, let us rather say, an apparatus for converting those prevailing opinions, on matters of morality, into reasons for themselves."[2] Mill regards utilitarianism as the only escape from confused and arbitrary moral conceptions; and he accepts it primarily as the only ethical system which gives a real deduction of moral rules from a single principle. This is the secret of his enthusiasm for Bentham's ethical work. He had been too thoroughly "rooted and grounded" in indi-

[1] Autobiography, p. 109.

[2] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. ii. p. 453.

vidualism to detect the abstraction which underlay Bentham's whole conception of conduct; and when he read the 'Principles of Morals and Legislation' all his previous ideas became an orderly and complete system of ethics. "The feeling rushed upon me," he says, "that all previous moralists were superseded, and that here indeed was the commencement of a new era in thought."[1] The principle of utility "fell exactly into its place," he adds, "as the key-stone which held together the detached and fragmentary component parts of my knowledge and beliefs. It gave unity to my conceptions of things."[2]

For Bentham himself the interest of utilitarianism had been primarily logical: it gave him a principle for the theory of legislation, just as his psychological hedonism and his theory of the "sanctions" of morality summed up, in a convenient formula, the means by which human conduct can be influenced; and Mill defends Bentham's ethical theory on the ground of its scientific or logical value. "It is by his *method* chiefly," he says, "that Bentham, as we think, justly earned a position in moral science analo-

[1] Autobiography, p. 65. [2] Ibid., p. 66.

gous to that of Bacon in physical. It is because he was the first to enter into the right mode of working ethical problems, though he worked many of them, as Bacon did physical, on insufficient data." [1] Except in the case of a conflict of moral rules, which must be settled by reference to first principles, the utilitarian controversy is "a question of arrangement and logical subordination rather than of practice; important principally in a purely scientific point of view, for the sake of the systematic unity and coherency of ethical philosophy." [2] That morality should be "referred to an *end* of some sort, and not left in the dominion of vague feeling or inexplicable internal conviction, that it be made a matter of reason and calculation, and not merely of sentiment, is essential to the very idea of moral philosophy; is, in fact, what renders argument or discussion on moral questions possible." [1]

This logical character of the importance of the utilitarian principle does not make it less significant, in Mill's eyes, for the practice of morality. "The contest," he says, "between the morality

[1] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. ii. p. 462.
[2] Ibid., vol. i. p. 385.

which appeals to an external standard, and that which grounds itself on internal conviction, is the contest of progressive morality against stationary —of reason and argument against the mere deification of opinion and habit."[1] He makes this, in fact, his chief apology for utilitarian ethics, that the utilitarian principle is one by which concrete acts and general moral rules can be judged and determined. He points out that certain of the consequences of an action can generally be foreseen,[2] and that it is the function of a science of ethics to criticise these consequences in terms of the end which it assumes.[3] He urges, in favour of utilitarianism, that the principle which it makes use of can be made a criterion of the consequences of action, and therefore a ground for rules of conduct: utilitarianism is, in this way, a real theory of right and wrong in conduct[4]— a theory fitted to guide action. It is thus mainly as an assertion of the moral significance of consequences that Mill defends hedonism. He shares

[1] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. ii. p. 472.
[2] Ibid., vol. i. p. 142.
[3] Logic, p. 620.
[4] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. i. pp. 384 ff.

Bentham's contempt for the authority of those unjustified sentiments of sympathy and antipathy which are apt to be regarded as the ultimate court of appeal in moral questions.[1] He points out that "to all those *à priori* moralists, who deem it necessary to argue at all, utilitarian arguments are indispensable;"[2] Whewell "deduces his secondary principles" from the hedonistic end, and defends them on hedonistic grounds;[3] and Kant finds in experience and preference the real ground of his criterion.[4] The utilitarian principle is thus an essential element in the method of ethics.

Mill finds the peculiar excellence of Bentham's utilitarianism in two characteristics of his method.

In the first place, Bentham's method is inductive and analytic. More than any previous moralist, he seems to Mill to have the scientific quality—the power of going behind abstractions and generalities, and dealing with things in the concrete reality of their details.[5]

[1] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. ii. p. 499.

[2] Utilitarianism, p. 5.

[3] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. ii. p. 496.

[4] Utilitarianism, p. 6.

[5] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. i. pp. 341-346.

In the second place, Mill praises the constructiveness of Bentham's work. "With him," he says, "the first use to be made of his ultimate principle, was to erect on it, as a foundation, secondary or middle principles, capable of serving as premises for a body of ethical doctrine not derived from existing opinions, but fitted to be their test."[1] His work is positive, and not merely destructive or critical; and its value is therefore permanent. This constructive utility of Bentham's ethical theory, which had been part of its original attraction for Mill, continued to appeal to him, even when he was most aware of Bentham's shortcomings; and his sense of it helped the individualistic presuppositions of the theory to retain that hold upon Mill's mind which they never entirely lost.

But, with all his belief in the logical value of the principle of utility, and with all his appreciation of the force and skill with which Bentham had developed and applied that principle, Mill is keenly aware of the limitations of Bentham's system of morality. He criticises it with all the energy of a former disciple. He points out that

[1] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. ii. p. 461.

Bentham makes no contribution to the science of personal morality, since his theory "does not pretend to aid individuals in the formation of their own character;"[1] and he insists that without an ideal of personal life, "the regulation of . . . outward actions must be altogether halting and imperfect."[2]

In such criticism of Bentham's ethical thinking Mill shows a sense of its outwardness and of its failure to meet the facts of moral experience, which belongs to his own deepened consciousness of the spiritual significance of conduct. When he says that Benthamism "will do nothing . . . for the spiritual interests of society,"[3] he betrays a consciousness of an ideal which is not expressed in his hedonism. The mere summation of pleasures has become in a high degree irrelevant. Mill is thinking of moral life in terms of an idea of character, to which no justice is done when it is criticised merely as a means to the production of pleasant feeling. He expresses, in this renunciation of Bentham's theory of life, the demand for a direct relation between the

[1] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. i. p. 363.
[2] Ibid., p. 364. [3] Ibid., p. 365.

moral end and the conduct which realises it. Such a demand — inconsistent with a purely hedonistic theory of the moral criterion, and with the determinism which is natural to such a theory — connects itself with Mill's belief in the reality and importance of voluntary choice, and is fulfilled by a conception of moral goodness as a real quality of self-conscious action.

Mill's idea of conduct as a spiritual function, however he may fail to give it coherent expression, issues in a view of morality which stands in no very positive relation to his hedonism. It betrays itself in the social character of his conception of the moral end, in the extent to which he qualifies his assertion of the worth of pleasure, and in the importance which he attaches to the inward aspect of the moral life. We shall have to see, in the next chapter, how largely these ways of thinking modify the complexion of his utilitarian ethics.

CHAPTER X

THE WORTH OF CONDUCT

It has already been suggested that Hedonism is a theory which makes morality relative to the interests of personal life; and it is especially characteristic of Mill that he emphasises this personal aspect of moral good. His sense of the value of conduct is not diminished by his belief in the possibility of giving a naturalistic account of its development;[1] and, with all his experientialism, he retains the strongest and sanest conviction of the worth of practical ideals.[2] His conception of such ideals, and of the value which they express, makes them relative to the needs of individual persons.

[1] Cf. Autobiography, p. 151.

[2] Cf. Dissertations and Discussions, vol. iii. p. 16.

Against all abstract conceptions of value, and against the materialistic interpretation of it which is more often implied in habits of thought and conduct than theoretically expressed, he maintains the relativity of every kind of good to personal consciousness and experience. Human desire is the source of the value of things: their worth consists in the satisfaction of desire which they afford. The people of a country, for example, "are that for the sake of which its wealth exists;"[1] and social institutions, and economic conditions, are criticised in relation to the good of individuals. Popular, and even scientific, critics of utilitarianism are apt to do but scant justice to the unqualified assertion which the theory makes of the worth of the human interests. Mill yields to no idealist in his magnificent contempt for material things, when these are made to seem more important than the needs of personal life which it is their proper function to satisfy. His economic theory expresses, at every turn, the loftiest humanism, and the most complete disregard of all apparent advantages which do not really benefit individuals.

[1] Political Economy, p. 6.

This is the meaning of his suggestion of the need for a criticism of consumption, and for a proper appreciation of the relative value of things. He does not look with unqualified approval on the mere desire of wealth. This "haste to be rich," and the stimulus to production which it gives, are not in themselves good; and they do not even afford any real security for the realisation of ethical or economic ideals. Mill's point of view is that of a moralist, whose humanism teaches him to look below the surface of things, and not to accept blindly the thoughtless estimates either of the populace or of a scientific cult. He sees in the commercial life of England, and in the very mood of its industrial prosperity, an ambition that defeats itself, and a materialism whose doom is already sealed. "In England," he says, "it is not the desire of wealth that needs to be taught, but the use of wealth, and appreciation of the objects of desire which wealth cannot purchase, or for attaining which it is not required. Every real improvement in the character of the English, whether it consists in giving them higher aspirations, or only a juster estimate of the value of their present objects

of desire, must necessarily moderate the ardour of their devotion to the pursuit of wealth."[1]

For his own part, he is "not charmed with the ideal of life held out by those who think that the normal state of human beings is that of struggling to get on;"[2] he finds, in the scramble for riches, and all its results, only "the disagreeable symptoms of one of the phases of industrial progress;"[2] and he suggests that "the best state for human nature is that in which, while no one is poor, no one desires to be richer, nor has any reason to fear being thrust back, by the efforts of others to push themselves forward."[2] He admits, indeed, that competition stimulates and increases production; but the mere increase of material wealth does not appear to him to be absolutely or necessarily good. "It is only in the backward countries of the world that increased production is still an important object: in those most advanced, what is economically needed is a better distribution;"[3] and economy in production will only secure real advantages when "civilization and improvement shall have so far advanced, that what is a benefit

[1] Political Economy, p. 65. [2] Ibid., p. 453.
[3] Ibid., p. 454.

to the whole shall be a benefit to each individual composing it."[1] Unproductive and not productive use of wealth is the ultimate end of the whole economic process; and it is not the amount but the misapplication of unproductively consumed wealth that calls for criticism.[2] Material wealth is, in fact, of secondary importance for Mill. "A stationary condition of capital and population implies no stationary state of human improvement."[3] On the contrary, the true ends of conduct can all be realised even when purely material progress is not going on. Moral and social advance, and the improvement of the art of living, do not depend on unlimited increase of material wealth; and they are hindered, rather than furthered, by the engrossment of men in "the art of getting on." If men's minds were free from this purely selfish occupation, then, "instead of serving no purpose but the increase of wealth, industrial improvements would produce their legitimate effect, that of abridging human labour."[4] Every economic condition, in fact, depends, for its worth, upon its effect on

[1] Political Economy, p. 461.
[2] Ibid., pp. 33, 34.
[3] Ibid., p. 454.
[4] Ibid., p. 455.

personal life. It is only in virtue of its use by conscious persons that wealth is good; and it is good simply in so far as it lends itself to their purposes.

This conception of value is profoundly ethical. Against the attempt to crush or overshadow the human spirit, or to silence its claims by the worship of outward prosperity and the deification of material wealth, Mill affirms the supreme worth of personal life, and its moral superiority to all impersonal things; and, in this assertion of the personal source of all value, he joins himself to those whose estimate is most worthy of heed. This is the ethical way of conceiving value; and it is this which makes hedonism an ethical theory.

This idea, however, that all worth is relative to personal ends, gives fundamental ethical importance to the mode in which personality is conceived. We have already seen that the degree in which Mill's ethical theory is affected by his individualistic idea of personality commits him to a view of the moral end, which separates it from the acts in which it is realised, and makes it only an external effect of them. This dislocation of the moral end from action

leads, as we have seen, to real difficulties within hedonism itself; and a further difficulty arises in the attempt to pass from the egoism, which is involved in the theory that all desire is for personal pleasure, to the universalism of the utilitarian conception of the moral end. Mill partly evades this difficulty by a recognition of the social character of personality, which serves to justify his ethical universalism, but which is not consistent with his attempt to derive morality from an individualistic theory of desire.

While he does not "conceive life to be so rich in enjoyments, that it can afford to forego the cultivation of all those which address themselves to what M. Comte terms the egoistic propensities,"[1] and while he makes pleasure itself a good, Mill yet affirms that enjoyments need to be moralised; and he makes their "moralisation" consist "in cultivating the habitual wish to share them with others, and with all others, and scorning to desire anything for oneself which is incapable of being so shared."[2]

The social conception of morality could not but come naturally to a disciple of Bentham

[1] Auguste Comte and Positivism, p. 145. [2] Ibid.

Bentham's "morals" were of a political kind, meant to serve as a basis for legislation; and an ethical system intended primarily to guide the work of a legislator could hardly fail to be determined by the idea of a "common good." But Bentham's conception of conduct was not of a kind that made it possible for him to regard the general happiness as an end or object of desire for the individuals who make up society. It is an end, on his theory, for the community or for the legislator; but it is not desired by individuals; and the function of government is to use penal sanctions of various kinds in such a way as to establish an external connection between the private pleasure of individuals and the general good. The social character of morality is thus conceived by Bentham in a very imperfect way. The common good, or the greatest happiness of the greatest number, is not really made a moral end, because it cannot be desired by the individual agent.

While Mill's recognition of the social character of morality is really a development of Bentham's political or legislative conception of it, he does more than Bentham to justify such

a conception, because he regards personal life as itself social, and makes social relationships natural to man. His assertion that the moral end is a common good connects itself with his idea of the individual as a member of society; and this revised idea of the individual, which considers his actual nature to be in some degree the embodiment of social relations, makes the common good a possible object of desire for him. The moralisation of desire — its identification with a common interest—is rendered possible by the pressure of society upon its members, and by the degree in which their nature is formed by their social relations.

"To do as one would be done by, and to love one's neighbour as oneself, constitute the ideal perfection of utilitarian morality;"[1] and the realisation of this ideal morality can be best approached by such a development of social institutions, and of public opinion, as will tend to identify private with general interests.[1] Social interests do not, on Mill's theory, require to be implanted in man artificially. "The deeply rooted conception which every individual even

[1] Utilitarianism, p. 25.

now has of himself as a social being, tends to make him feel it one of his natural wants that there should be harmony between his feelings and aims and those of his fellow-creatures."[1] The "feeling of unity with our fellow-creatures" does indeed require education and cultivation; but it is capable of becoming "as deeply rooted in our character, and to our own consciousness as completely a part of our nature, as the horror of crime is in an ordinarily well-brought-up young person;"[2] and this is possible because it is not an external law but a natural feeling.

This naturalness of the social interests constitutes the possibility of that action for the general good in which morality consists; but, in itself, it is a mere potentiality of moral life; and morality only grows up under the influence of forces which tend to identify public and private good. Society is the great educator of moral life. Its wellbeing depends on the power of unselfish interests:[3] its very existence is only possible by a discipline of selfish propensities "which consists in subordinating them to a common system of

[1] Utilitarianism, p. 50. [2] Ibid., p. 40.
[3] Representative Government, p. 29.

opinions;"[1] and this dependence of society upon the power of combined action, which its members have, makes its development a growth in individuals of those qualities which unite their interests, so that "there is not a more accurate test of the progress of civilization than the progress of the power of co-operation."[2] The qualities which social life requires are thus wrought into the characters of men; and the exigencies of society produce such a development of their personal aptitudes that "what is lost in the separate efficiency of each, is far more than made up by the greater capacity of united action. In proportion as they put off the qualities of the savage, they become amenable to discipline; capable of adhering to plans concerted beforehand, and about which they may not have been consulted: of subordinating their individual caprice to a preconceived determination, and performing severally the parts allotted to them in a combined undertaking."[3] Civilisation is, in fact, "a struggle against the animal instincts."[4]

[1] Logic, p. 605.

[2] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. i. p. 165.

[3] Political Economy, p. 423. [4] Ibid., p. 226.

This effect of social life upon the moral tendencies is largely due to the power of public opinion. The "feeling of unity with our fellow-creatures" shows itself in sensitiveness and responsiveness to their esteem. "All experience shows that the mass of mankind never judge of moral questions for themselves, never see anything to be right or wrong until they have been frequently told it."[1] The modern civilised man finds much of the work of moral judgment "done to his hand,"[2] and inherits an experience on which "all the prudence, as well as all the morality of life, is dependent."[2] Bentham's underestimate of this accumulated experience is an aspect of his individualism which Mill singles out for criticism;[3] and Mill himself is keenly aware of its importance. Not only "when it succeeds in enforcing a servile conformity to itself,"[4] but still more when it forms a steadying pressure against reforming zeal, the public opinion which embodies the traditions and experiences of hu-

[1] Political Economy, p. 226.

[2] Utilitarianism, p. 34.

[3] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. i. pp. 351, 352.

[4] Representative Government, p. 207, cf. p. 116.

manity is a powerful and wholesome influence upon character.[1] Society corrects, by this and other means, the one-sidedness of individuals;[2] and all interaction with others, whether within or beyond the limits of a single nationality, develops a breadth of character and interests, by which individuals are redeemed from their isolation, and the idea of a common good is made possible.[3] Both by the activities which its relations produce, and by the opinions and feelings which arise out of its needs, social life tends to identify the felt interests of each individual with those of others.

This moral power of society is so essential an element in its very nature, that Mill makes the moral effect of social institutions a test of their worth. "Human beings owe to each other help to distinguish the better from the worse, and encouragement to choose the former and avoid the latter. They should be for ever stimulating each other to increased exercise of their higher faculties, and increased direction of their feelings and aims towards wise instead of foolish, elevat-

[1] Representative Government, p. 207; cf. p. 116.

[2] Ibid., p. 300. [3] Cf. Political Economy, pp. 351, 352.

ing instead of degrading, objects and pursuits." [1] Even when Mill is most sceptical of the possibility of giving moral help, and most critical of undue interference, he never suggests that the claim of human beings on the moral support of their fellows is less valid than any of their other rights. It is thus not surprising that he makes the moral effect of social relations the main criterion of their value.

This, for example, is one of his chief arguments for a reform of marriage laws and of the relations which they regulate. No doubt much of Mill's contention in this matter is a demand for "better bread than can be made of wheat;" and many of his suggestions indicate, not so much a serious appreciation of the facts of the case, as the impatience of that untold and tragic yearning for a perfected human life, which lends so much of pathos and dignity to his intellectual work. But however little he may be thought to contribute to the actual question of what is or is not involved in the distinction of sex, there is no mistaking the ground on which he argues for legal equality of married persons, as "the only

[1] Liberty, p. 44.

means of rendering the daily life of mankind, in any high sense, a school of moral cultivation." [1] He demands a reform of the relation of men and women, because he sees how much that relation means for the moral health of society: because family life determines the moral directions of men, the position of woman, which gives family life its character and its power for good or evil, has an importance which Mill finds it impossible to overrate. The main significance of the whole question, for him, is in the effect of the marriage relation upon character, and in the special power, which that relation has, of forming and developing moral ideas.[2]

In the same way, the value of all other social arrangements consists in their moral usefulness: their justification is their tendency to make the common good the interest of individuals. Penal laws exist in order to enforce that conduct which is for the general advantage;[3] and their legitimacy depends, for Mill, upon their serving this

[1] Subjection of Women, p. 78.

[2] Cf. Subjection of Women, esp. pp. 79-82, 148-152, 159, 177-180.

[3] Political Economy, p. 583.

purpose. "The proper end of government" is to reduce the waste of energy occasioned by injurious conduct, so that the whole efforts of mankind may be "turned to the legitimate employment of the human faculties, that of compelling the powers of nature to be more and more subservient to physical and moral good."[1] The protection which society affords to its members and their interests is valuable chiefly as the condition on which alone the development of industry and frugality is possible.[2] "Insecurity of person and property, is as much as to say, uncertainty of the connection between all human exertion or sacrifice, and the attainment of the ends for which they are undergone;"[3] and the obligation of society to enforce security arises from the fatal effect which this uncertainty has upon the development of character. The State is thus a moral institution. Its function is to maintain those conditions in which character can develop.

Mill's faith in democracy is rooted in the same moral idea of the value of institutions. It belongs to his conviction that society ought to

[1] Political Economy, p. 591. [2] Ibid., p. 422.
[3] Ibid., p. 531.

serve the moral interests of its members; and it expresses his belief in the educative effect of popular government, rather than any blind confidence in the wisdom or goodness of the masses. The worth of popular institutions consists largely in their tendency to make each member of society "feel himself one of the public, and whatever is for their benefit to be for his benefit."[1] They are a "school of public spirit;"[1] and without them the development of character cannot be complete.

Moral life cannot be perfected in isolation: no matter how well able the individual may be to conduct his life in solitude, the highest moral excellence is only possible for him as a member of society; and "the aim of improvement should be not solely to place human beings in a condition in which they will be able to do without one another, but to enable them to work with or for one another in relations not involving dependence."[2] The effect of a state of society upon character is "in itself the most interesting phenomenon which that state of society

[1] Representative Government, p. 68.

[2] Political Economy, p. 461.

can possibly present;"[1] for there are certain personal qualities which can only be developed in society; and these, on the utilitarian theory, are of the very essence of morality. The value of social life is thus ethical—it consists in an effect on character: society has its "perfect work" in producing those moral qualities which cannot exist apart from it and on which its own stability depends. The end of society is realised in the production of that type of character which is fitted for social life — in the identification of the interests of individuals with the general good.

Mill's theory of the relation of morality to social life thus forms a highly important element in his ethics. It constitutes a real advance upon Bentham's external way of conceiving the relation; and it suggests, although not in a way altogether consistent with Mill's explicit theory of desire, how a common good or general happiness may come to be desired by individuals. It is of more importance, however, for understanding Mill's ethical theory, to observe that the way in which he connects the moral life

[1] Logic, p. 590.

with society modifies his hedonism in two respects.

In the first place, the moral standard, in reference to which Mill criticises social conditions, is not strictly hedonistic. Too much, certainly, might be made of this point; since it may be argued that, while the tendency of social conditions to promote good character is the best criterion of their value, the goodness of character itself is determined by its hedonic worth. While, however, this objectivity of the standard actually applied by Mill to social relations does not, I think, warrant us in suggesting that he abandons the hedonistic point of view, it is yet not without interest. It indicates at least that other, and more objective, criteria can be applied to the phenomena in question more readily than the hedonistic standard; and it leads naturally to the conclusion that good character is related, in no merely external way, to the moral end.

It is still more important, however, to remark that Mill's whole assertion, that the moral end must be a "common good," contains the admission (which, indeed, he explicitly makes) that pleasure requires "moralisation" — that mere

satisfaction does not realise the moral end, but that the very idea of morality requires a criticism of desires.

Mill is, in fact, aware of the slight extent to which men's actual desires afford them moral guidance, and of the inadequacy of their subjective feelings as a clue to their real good. He recognises that "life could not go on if it were not admitted that impulses must be controlled, and that reason ought to govern our actions;"[1] and he maintains that "the duty of man is the same in respect to his own nature as in respect to the nature of all other things, namely, not to follow but to amend it."[2] Inclinations cannot be assumed to be a safe guide for conduct: they "may be the expression not of the divine will, but of the fetters which impede its free action; and to take hints from these for the guidance of our own conduct may be falling into a trap laid by the enemy."[3]

The actual desires of men do not, in fact, represent their real needs: the greatest misfortunes —such as "ignorance and want of culture"—are

[1] Essays on Religion, p. 45. [2] Ibid., p. 54.
[3] Ibid., p. 55.

those "of which the persons suffering from them are apt to be least aware."[1] The real value of things is not always represented in the desire felt for them. There are things "of the worth of which the demand of the market is by no means a test; things of which the utility does not consist in ministering to inclinations, nor in serving the daily uses of life, and the want of which is least felt where the need is greatest. This is peculiarly true of those things which are chiefly useful as tending to raise the character of human beings. The uncultivated cannot be competent judges of cultivation. Those who most need to be made wiser and better, usually desire it least, and if they desired it, would be incapable of finding the way to it by their own lights."[2] The utility which Mill makes his moral principle is "utility in the largest sense, grounded on the permanent interests of a man as a progressive being."[3]

This sense of the limitations of subjective feeling as a guide for conduct determines one of Mill's most significant differences from Bentham.

[1] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. i. p. 28.

[2] Political Economy, p. 575. [3] Liberty, p. 6.

Bentham had denied all qualitative distinction between pleasures: pleasures differed, for him, only in quantity—in their intensity, that is to say, and in their duration. They differed also, when regarded as motives, in their nearness or remoteness, and their certainty or uncertainty. Considered as furnishing a criterion for conduct, they could also be compared in respect of their tendency to be followed by pleasant and not to be followed by painful feelings—their fecundity and purity; and when they were considered in relation to a number or community of persons, it became necessary to ask by how many they could be enjoyed. But all this is, for Bentham, a purely quantitative estimate of pleasure.[1]

Mill, on the other hand, maintains that "it is quite compatible with the principle of utility to recognise the fact, that some *kinds* of pleasure are more desirable and more valuable than others."[2] "It would be absurd," he says, "that . . . the estimation of pleasures should be supposed to depend on quantity alone."[3] He points to the fact that "there is no known Epicurean

[1] Bentham's Principles of Morals and Legislation, chap. iv.
[2] Utilitarianism, p. 11. [3] Ibid., p. 12.

theory of life which does not assign to the pleasures of the intellect, of the feelings and imagination, and of the moral sentiments, a much higher value as pleasures than to those of mere sensation;"[1] and he asserts that "the feelings and judgment of the experienced" "declare the pleasures derived from the higher faculties to be preferable *in kind*, apart from the question of intensity, to those of which the animal nature, disjoined from the higher faculties, is susceptible."[2] This reference to the "feelings and judgment of the experienced" is Mill's ground for the distinction between "higher" and "lower" pleasures, and for the preference which the very act of distinguishing them gives to the higher. "On a question," he says, "which is the best worth having of two pleasures, or which of two modes of existence is the most grateful to the feelings, apart from its moral attributes and from its consequences, the judgment of those who are qualified by knowledge of both, or, if they differ, that of the majority among them, must be admitted as final."[3] He asserts that only those whose higher

[1] Utilitarianism, p. 11. [2] Ibid., p. 16. [3] Ibid., p. 15.

faculties have been trained are capable of estimating the relative value of different kinds of pleasure; and he commits the judgment of the worth of things to the wise and good so completely that it would not "be easy, even for an unbeliever, to find a better translation of the rule of virtue from the abstract into the concrete, than to endeavour so to live that Christ would approve our life." [1]

The mode in which Mill proposes to test the relative value of different classes of pleasure suggests the real nature of those distinctions of kind which he asserts to exist among them. It indicates that he is serious in distinguishing those differences of kind from any merely quantitative variations such as Bentham's theory had considered: it implies that pleasures are distinguished by another criterion than that of pleasantness alone.

It is hardly possible to suspect Mill of authorising one man to judge what is actually most pleasant for another. In respect of their mere pleasantness to him, each man must be allowed to be the best judge of his own enjoyments: so

[1] Essays on Religion, p. 255.

much of liberty can hardly be refused even to the most foolish; and if the saint or the sage professed to compare the pleasantness of higher and lower enjoyments, he might lay himself open to the retort that he did not adequately appreciate the joys of cock-fighting or alcoholic intoxication. The "experienced" have, indeed, no special authority to pronounce impartially upon the pleasantness of different feelings; for it is the very privilege of virtue not to crave for vice, and not to desire its joys. The authority of the wise is in a different sphere. Mill's appeal to their judgment is indeed not to be gainsaid: it has its credentials not only in Plato and Aristotle, and in Stoicism, but, under more or less disguise, in all ethical theory that keeps contact with the issues of the moral life; it expresses the human personal quality of all moral judgment, which has no value as a dead code but only as a living intuition. But the judgment of the experienced applies to pleasure only because pleasure is not what hedonism sometimes takes it to be—an isolated mental state, unrelated to personal qualities, and capable of being fully calculated in time and intensity. The judgment of the wise, and indeed

the moral judgment, applies to pleasures in respect not of their mere pleasantness, but of other relations from which their moral significance is really derived: it applies to them as satisfactions of desire, or as results of conduct, and, in either case, as related to the character which action and desire express.

This is implied in Mill's own contention that the judgment of the wise approves the type of character which is also that required for the general happiness:[1] it is not a set of pleasures, but a kind of person, that is preferred by "the feelings and judgment of the experienced;" and the preference is thus not simply hedonistic. The same view of the distinction of kind among pleasures is conveyed in Mill's insistence on the relativity of pleasures to character and faculty;[2] and it is even more evident in the judgment that "it is better to be a human being dissatisfied than a pig satisfied; better to be Socrates dissatisfied than a fool satisfied."[3] In such a statement, "better," plainly, does not mean more pleasant. The idea of pleasure or happiness as the end has given place to a criterion of another kind. The desire that

[1] Utilitarianism, p. 16. [2] Ibid., p. 11. [3] Ibid., p. 14.

is satisfied by the "sense of dignity" or personal worth is a desire that depends on the individual's consciousness of himself as a moral agent and a member of society.[1]

The same sense of the inadequacy of simple hedonism determines Mill's assertion of the necessity for estimating conduct in its "æsthetic" and "sympathetic," as well as in its "moral" or utilitarian aspect.[2] He criticises Bentham's omission, from his theory of conduct, of all regard for anything except its outward consequences; and he insists on the applicability of other criteria, which express the worth of conduct in relation, not to its consequences, but to the character from which it proceeds.

The actual development, then, of Mill's ethical theory makes large inroads upon his official hedonism. His universalistic conception of the moral end, and his recognition of a distinction of kind among pleasures, are two qualifications of his general theory of moral good, which are identical in principle, and which are inconsistent no less with the logical use than

[1] Utilitarianism, p. 13; cf. p. 18.

[2] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. i. pp. 386-388.

with the psychological basis of the hedonistic criterion.

In regarding the "greatest happiness of the greatest number" as the end which should determine conduct, he makes the moral good of the individual agent consist not in the enjoyment but in the production of pleasure; and, however much he may be disposed to believe in the actual coincidence of private and general happiness, he does not hesitate, in case of conflict, to make the common good the criterion of conduct. This, however, is to make the moral good of the individual consist, not in a state of feeling, but in a kind of activity or personal character. Similarly, the distinction of kind among pleasures depends upon their relation to the objective life of character; and by this distinction, and by the non-hedonistic preference of higher to lower pleasures, the good, whether of single individuals or of the greatest number, is made to consist not in pleasure or satisfaction but in qualities of personal life. This conception of the moral end derives no support from the doctrine that only pleasure is desired; it may rather be said to be inconsistent with that doctrine, and to depend

for its legitimacy upon a less abstract notion of desire.

The far-reaching qualification of hedonism, which is conveyed in making the moral end for individuals a common good, and in establishing qualitative differences among pleasures, is fatal also to that logical use of the hedonistic principle, as a moral calculus, which largely determined Mill's belief in its scientific value. If moral good depends upon character, and if their relation to character determines the worth of pleasures themselves, then the detail of the moral life cannot be regulated by mere calculation of pleasant feelings in the abstract.

We have already seen that it is this conception of moral good, as a state of character, which Mill actually employs as a criterion of economic conditions and of social institutions; and the same idea of the moral end determines his appreciation of individuality and independence of character. He regards strength of disposition and character as itself a good. "Desires and impulses are as much a part of a perfect human being, as beliefs and restraints;" [1] and "strong impulses are but

[1] Liberty, p. 35.

another name for energy."[1] The vigorous and active character is not only most powerful for good as well as for evil, but is also that which is most likely to develop breadth of interests, and the capacity for adapting itself to the conditions of life:[2] it is "not only intrinsically the best, but is the likeliest to acquire all that is really excellent or desirable in the opposite type."[3]

The worth of individuality thus consists in its being the condition of self-development; and the supreme value of character is also the reason why "mankind are greater gainers by suffering each other to live as seems good to themselves, than by compelling each to live as seems good to the rest."[4] Mill's belief that, "among the works of man, . . . the first in importance surely is man himself,"[5] is the motive that leads him to defend that "circle around every individual human being, which no government, be it that of one, of a few, or of the many, ought to be permitted to overstep."[6] Interference with the liberty of any human being is only warranted by the interests

[1] Liberty, p. 35. [2] Representative Government, pp. 60 ff.
[3] Ibid., p. 63. [4] Liberty, p. 8. [5] Ibid., p. 34.
[6] Political Economy, p. 569.

of others: it is justified because "all that makes existence valuable to any one, depends on the enforcement of restraints upon the actions of other people;"[1] and its limits are set by the same ethical principle from which it derives its authority. Wherever no interests but those of the agent are involved, interference with freedom of action becomes not only needless but hurtful;[2] for "human nature is not a machine to be built after a model, and set to do exactly the work prescribed for it, but a tree, which requires to grow and develop itself on all sides, according to the tendency of the inward forces which make it a living thing."[3] The character of each individual member of society is not simply a means to social prosperity, and a part of the social whole: it is this, but it is also itself a whole, with its own laws and qualities, and its own ends determined by these. On this account, "if a person possesses any tolerable amount of common-sense and experience, his own mode of laying out his existence is the best, not

[1] Liberty, p. 3.

[2] Cf. Liberty, esp. pp. 3 ff. and pp. 32 ff.; Political Economy, p. 569.

[3] Liberty, p. 34.

because it is the best in itself, but because it is his own mode."[1]

Liberty is, indeed, defended by Mill on hedonistic grounds. Differences of individual temperament must condition differences in the sources of pleasure, and each man is therefore likely to be best able to secure his own happiness;[2] freedom itself, too, is the most essential of human satisfactions, and nothing can compensate for its absence;[3] but the chief moral necessity for it consists in the fact that all development and all individuality of personal character depend upon it;[4] and it is because these are threatened, by the despotism of government and public opinion, that Mill insists on the need for "a great social support for ideas and opinions different from those of the mass."[5]

Mill's argument for liberty, vitiated as it may

[1] Liberty, p. 39; cf. Subjection of Women, pp. 159 ff.

[2] Liberty, p. 40.

[3] Cf. Subjection of Women, p. 178 and p. 182; Political Economy, pp. 129 ff.

[4] Political Economy, p. 570; Liberty, esp. pp. 36, 37, and 41; Representative Government, p. 48.

[5] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. ii. p. 73; cf. vol. i. pp. 188, 380.

be in some respects by an abstract individualism, is thus, in the main, a claim for all possible freedom of action, on the ground that such freedom affords the only hope of moral development. His conviction of the worth of human personality is the idea which guides that sober strenuous liberalism, of which he is the philosopher as well as the "saint."[1] He sees, in human character and conduct, possibilities of worth such as belong to nothing else; and with magnificent hopefulness, he regards these possibilities as the promise of a perfect life in a perfect society: he finds in their development the highest human task, and in their realisation the supreme good.

Such realisation, however, is not to be brought about by external forces and influences: it can only come as a spontaneous growth from within. All that can be done to develop character from without is to remove the obstructions that arise from bad conditions, physical or moral. In itself the realisation of the moral end—the perfecting of personal life—must be self-realisation: it can

[1] "I used familiarly to call him the Saint of Rationalism,"—Mr Gladstone, in a letter quoted in Mr W. L. Courtney's 'Life of John Stuart Mill,' p. 142.

be nothing else; for character cannot be manufactured, and its perfection is essentially its own growth.

Mill is therefore one of those who find in personal life, rightly understood, its own law. He regards the self-development of character as the moral end. We have seen by what vague and partly incoherent hints he suggests this conclusion; but it is a conclusion which at all events represents his real ethics better than the hedonism, which is generally regarded as his theory of moral good. His modifications of the doctrine that pleasure is the end of conduct are so large and so significant as to deprive that doctrine of any consistent influence on his thinking. His idea of self-consciousness and its relation to character does not, indeed, authorise any ethical theory which asserts the inner unity of conduct with its end; but it is hardly possible to avoid suggesting that "self-realisation" is the most fitting interpretation for utility "grounded on the permanent interests of a man as a progressive being."

CHAPTER XI

NATURE AND SPIRIT

MILL'S intellectual work is so deeply influenced by philosophical ideas, that it is surprising to discover how little of a metaphysician he really is. He never raises metaphysical problems independently, and on their own account; and, even in his logical discussions, he takes pains to evade metaphysical issues whenever he can do so. His interest is in the concrete relations of things, rather than in their ultimate meaning; and metaphysical construction is alien to his mental habit. There are probably few other thinkers whose intellectual attitude is so directly dependent upon philosophical theories, and who have, at the same time, done so little in the way of discussing philosophical principles.

This is all the more singular because Mill's speculation contains two elements which raise the problem of metaphysic in the most definite way. It develops, on the one hand, the idea of an order of natural relations, and, on the other hand, a real sense of practical and moral interests. Now these are the two leading factors in the metaphysical problem; and the extent to which they occupy Mill's mind makes his abstinence from metaphysical discussion hard to be understood.

In the first place, Mill's consciousness of an order of nature is more than nominal. There is nothing to invalidate it in his "psychological" conception of matter, as merely "permanent possibilities of sensation"; and, while it is not easy to see how the idea of a system of natural relations can be reconciled with the doctrine that causality is only invariable or unvarying sequence, yet the conception of the causal relation which underlies Mill's theory of Induction — that of unconditional dependence — defines, as well as asserts, the reality of nature. Mill entertains and investigates the idea of the natural order, which the explanations of physical science

imply: his theory of Induction expresses that conception of Nature which makes it objective and capable of being known.

It is still more significant, as a motive for metaphysical speculation, that, for Mill, man himself, no less than the conditions of his life, is part of the natural order, and a real object of knowledge: the fact that human knowledge and conduct form his main topic implies the presence in his theory of metaphysical issues; and their presence is all the more obvious because he discusses the value as well as the nature of mental facts.

His consciousness of nature, as a system of objective relations, and of man's place within that system, does nothing to weaken his ideal interests, or to impair his sense of the moral issues that are involved in human character and conduct. "It is only to a very vulgar type of mind," he says, "that a grand or beautiful object loses its charm when it loses some of its mystery, through the unveiling of a part of the process by which it is created in the secret recesses of Nature."[1] He recognises that the notion, "that

[1] Dissertations and Discussions, vol. iii. p. 111.

no causes can give rise to products of a more precious or elevated kind than themselves," "is at variance with the known analogies of Nature."[1] He distinguishes sharply, too, between the natural and the moral order; and he does not allow the actual or "natural" relations or things to fashion his idea of the relations that ought to obtain. The claims of ideal interests have never found a more convinced or more strenuous advocate than Mill of their validity and independence.

Now, the ideal interests and the effort that they symbolise are the chief motive of philosophy: philosophy depends on the unceasing contest between human intelligence and the dulness of earthly fact. In whatever degree all the details of human life may have been fashioned by the forces and pressures of nature, it is yet never without determination by the consciousness of ideals; and because it is, in this way, an effort, it is also an enigma. He who "seeks a country" must "confess that he is a stranger." The earth is a riddle to man, just in proportion as his affections are "set on things above." The world

[1] Essays on Religion, p. 152.

suggests a good that it does not realise; it rouses anticipations that it does not satisfy; and so it becomes a problem. The fact that Mill recognises the ideal as well as the natural aspect of things might lead us to expect more interest in this problem that he actually shows.

All theory is based on practice. Our traffic with the world gives us experiences and defines our wants; and, both to satisfy our wants and to combine our experiences, we are impelled to theorise. Our conduct burdens us with the need of asking what things are, or how they behave. We ask these questions about the things that we have to do with; and the answers that we find make up the sciences of these things.

But the fact that experience comes to us in the course of an effort imposes on us the necessity of asking a further question about things—of asking not only what they are but also what they mean. It must not be supposed that this, which is the problem of philosophy, can be separated in any absolute sense from that inquiry into the nature of things which is prosecuted by the special sciences. The investigation of the meaning of things implies that there is

a meaning which is positively and objectively theirs, and which is not a mere play of fancy on their surface. Philosophy assumes that things form in themselves an intelligible unity; and its problem is to discover the principle on which this unity depends. That meaning of things which philosophy investigates is thus not alien to their nature: it is simply the things themselves, understood in their fulness, or in the system of their relations to one another. On the other hand, in so far as the special sciences investigate certain abstracted elements or aspects of reality, they are prevented from giving a complete account of things: their function is to analyse things, and to express them in terms of their parts; but mere analysis can never give a complete explanation—for, even if carried to the furthest extent, it cannot render things perfectly intelligible. The meaning of things is their relation to the system to which they belong; and they can only be explained in terms of the principle by which that system is determined. Ultimate explanation is not of the whole by the parts, but of the part by the whole.

The demand for this kind of explanation, and with it the problem of philosophy, originates in the fact that experience is conditioned by activity and by the attempt to realise ideals. It is from these that experience derives its meaning: in proportion as it lends itself to them, it is significant; and in proportion as it fails to realise them, it is a problem which impels us to philosophise. In man's consciousness of ideals, and in the effort wherein he daily disowns anew that supremacy over him which things seem to claim, is the motive of his wonder — the mystery of his fate. For if personal life culminates in ideals, they limit even while they affirm its worth. They are our only clue to the explanation of reality; but, even while we affirm ourselves in them, in them also we become aware of our inadequacy — of the very partial and limited character of that satisfaction which we are in a position to demand. They assert, even while they seem to abrogate, human finitude. They affirm that man has a meaning for himself; but none the less clearly do they mark the fact that that meaning is partly hid from him; and so they generate philosophy.

The singleness of conscious life determines us to look for system in the world of our experiences: we inevitably demand system; our search for it is expressed in our ideas of worth; and the failure of things, as we know them, to correspond to these ideas—our inability to discern system in things—impels us in two directions.

In the first place, we cannot but objectify our ideal conceptions. The demands that we make upon things possess for us a reality which is in a certain sense greater than that of anything else. The system, of which these demands express our consciousness, is a necessity of thought. Failing to find it in the world of our experiences, we make it an object in itself; and we do so the more inevitably the more our search for it is foiled in things. The idea of it rouses feelings in us, impels us to activities, determines our relation to the objects of our knowledge. Religious experience knows it, and names it "God." Thinking it in terms of our ideals, and of whatever experiences answer best to them, and most inevitably in terms of that self-consciousness which determines our demand for it, we set it over against the things that

fail to belong to our idea of it. Faith becomes "the evidence of things not seen": the unyielding strength of our demand upon nature compels us to the recognition of a reality which—for us, at least—the world does not altogether contain.

But this attitude, inevitable as it may be, is not the whole effect of our attempt to unify experience. System remains not only the object of religious faith, but also a problem; and the making it a problem is what constitutes philosophy. Philosophy is a search for system in the world of real things. We may, or we may not, believe that we fully know the principle that determines things. Perhaps philosophy means that we do not; "for that which a man seeth why doth he yet hope for?" But only in so far as we are in search of a principle in reality can we be said to philosophise. Philosophy must always be the effort to think things as a unity, or to find in them that system which our ideal demands upon reality in some degree express. To abandon the idea of system is to abandon philosophy itself; and the system that philosophy seeks is a system of real relations.

It appears, then, that the problem of philo-

sophy, while in a sense it expresses nothing but reason's own nature, and the inevitable demand for a corresponding system, does, at the same time, arise from a deep-seated contradiction. It has its roots in the opposition of human personality to the world of nature. It originates in the antithesis of worth and fact, of that which ought to be and that which actually is. Now this opposition, which belongs to the very texture of experience, since experience is essentially an attempt to discern unity in things, is most obvious in the relation of moral life to the conditions in which it must be realised. The opposition is indeed evident in all knowledge, so long as the failure of things to appear as a consistent unity rouses a sense of contradictions that must be resolved; but it is more definitely apparent in the antagonism between the purely theoretic view of things and the practical way of regarding them as means to an end; and it grows into an acute contrast, when the single subject-matter of human conduct is made the topic, at once of a science which regards it simply as experienced fact, to be theoretically explained, and of judgments which criticise it in relation to

an end or law which it ought to realise. The problem of philosophy is thus more directly raised by the opposition of the ethical and psychological conceptions of conduct than by any other form of dualism; and the impossibility of evading this problem specially reveals itself in the vital connection which exists between the terms of the opposition in question.

On the one hand, Psychology — the study of actual human conduct — involves the ethical point of view. The implication of selfhood in mental states can only be understood ethically. Their existence, their positive and special nature, is determined by their relation to the freedom or self-distinction of personal life; but this is only intelligible or real in relation to the end or law which ideally determines it; and it is thus more evident in the case of mental phenomena than of any others that they are only understood when they are conceived in relation to an end. Until they are so conceived, they remain what we call "mere" phenomena—appearances and not reality.

On the other hand, it is nowhere more plain than in the moral judgment of conduct that ends

only maintain their character as ends, in virtue of their relation to the positive nature of things. Teleology implies, as Lotze and Wundt show, an absolute causal sequence in the world of events: "a universe which had no necessary connections between its parts could have no definite or significant structure as a whole."[1] In the case of ethics, it is specially evident that selfhood, freedom, and conformity to moral law can only be significant or intelligible in relation to those mental facts which they characterise. Every ethical system involves a psychology of conduct, and depends for its development upon its idea of what conduct actually is. The possibility of a science of ethics depends upon the discovery, in human character, of elements that can be made the means to a realisation of the moral end; and the denial of such elements invalidates the moral judgment: an ethic without psychology "swims in the air." The actual and the ideal aspects of conduct are thus related no less by mutual implication than by mere antithesis: whichever we may attempt to isolate involves us in the other. The problem of philosophy, regarded as the in-

[1] Mr Bosanquet's Logic, vol. ii. p. 82.

terpretation of experience, is nowhere forced upon us more definitely or more persistently than in the relations of psychology and ethics.

Mill's abstinence from metaphysical discussion is thus something of an anomaly. He is mainly occupied with ethical and psychological questions; he is by no means unaware of the radical distinction between the points of view which determine them; he is concerned with the practical difficulties which are involved in that distinction; and, both in the acceptance and in the partial surrender of his heritage of individualism, he is deeply influenced by metaphysical theories. His neglect of the metaphysical problem demands explanation.

It has already been suggested that this absence of purely metaphysical discussion is simply the negative aspect of Mill's naturalism, and belongs, in this way, to the practical aim and character of his intellectual work. It belongs hardly less to other qualities of his mind — to the sobriety which characterises his speculative more perhaps than his practical tendencies — to his freedom from that craving for systematic unity and completeness which he finds to be so fatally

conspicuous in the dogmatic Positivism of Comte.[1] It connects itself, too, we may suppose, with the absence of all religious elements from his early education. He is "one of the very few examples, in this country, of one who has, not thrown off religious belief, but never had it;"[2] and his attitude towards religious problems gives the impression of a sincere but unsuccessful attempt to understand the religious consciousness. This absence from his mind of the religious idea has real significance for his conception of philosophy. His view of religion suggests, in a striking way, his limitations in this respect.

Mill does not, indeed, maintain a consistent notion of what religious experience essentially is. He wavers, as Mr Morley shows,[3] between the idea that religion implies a supernatural object, and the view that its demands are capable of being satisfied within the known order of things: he does not decide between the idealisation and the abandonment of earthly life. He wavers no less between the notion that religion

[1] Auguste Comte and Positivism, esp. pp. 15 and 141.

[2] Autobiography, p. 43.

[3] Critical Miscellanies, 2d Series (1877), pp. 296 ff.

is simply ethical, and the conception of it as a knowledge or experience that reflects the presence of a real object; and he makes, indeed he attempts, no synthesis of these elements in the religious consciousness.

On the one hand, he finds "the essence of religion" in "strong and earnest direction of the emotions and desires towards an ideal object, recognised as of the highest excellence, and as rightfully paramount over all selfish objects of desire;"[1] and he sees "the principal worth of all religions whatever" in the "ideal conception of a Perfect Being" to which men may "habitually refer as the guide of their conscience."[2] But this idea of religion, as an imaginative or poetic reflection upon ideals of personal and especially of moral life, is replaced in Mill's polemical criticism of Hamilton and Mansel by a different conception of it. We find him regarding it as an experience of facts, or a way of conceiving the nature of things. "Whatever relates to God," he says, "I hold to be matter of inference; I would add, of inference *à posteriori*."[3] He maintains,

[1] Essays on Religion, p. 109. [2] Autobiography, p. 46.
[3] Examination of Hamilton, p. 47.

against Hamilton's Agnosticism, the possibility of knowing God positively as "a concrete reality."[1] He asserts that the denial of all knowledge of God depends upon a deliberate abstraction from positive and known facts. He contends that God is known, not indeed "in himself," but just as men and nature are known, relatively or phenomenally, "by his action on the creation, as known through my senses and my rational faculty."[2]

Mill's contention that "all proofs of religion, natural or revealed, must be derived either from the testimony of the senses, or from internal feelings of the mind, or from reasonings of which one or other of these sources supplied the premises,"[3] leads him to a conception of religion as itself a theory, and capable of complete theoretic expression. It becomes, for him, simply an opinion, capable of proof and disproof; and his humanistic idea of it is replaced by a set of arguments which result in a somewhat vague and insecure Deism. In this less ethical development of his theory of religion, he regards God primarily

[1] Examination of Hamilton, p. 60.
[2] Ibid., p. 125. [3] Ibid., p. 168.

as the Author of Nature; he makes an individualistic separation of the divine life from the ideal experiences of men; and he leaves the validity of religious experience wholly problematic, as indeed such a conception of it must inevitably do.

In this mode of conceiving religious experience, Mill accepts the traditions of his English predecessors. His whole idea of the way in which religion is to be authenticated recalls Berkeley's more mystical notion of a "Visible God"—a God whose very nature is revealed in the facts of the world and the order in which they affect us. The method, too, of his inquiry into religion has a good deal in common with that of Paley's much less critical investigation. Mill is not, indeed, directed from the outset, as Paley is, by a preconceived notion of the conclusion to be reached. His argument is more free and less conclusive than that of the famous 'Natural Theology.' But in Mill's Essays on "Nature" and "Theism," just as in Paley's work, there is an attempt to base the idea of God entirely upon a study of his doings in the world; and it is significant of this agreement in method that both Paley and Mill exalt that teleological proof which "is the

oldest, the clearest, and that most in conformity with the common reason of humanity." [1]

Now, this attempt to make the idea of God represent simply the facts of nature must be admitted to have real validity and usefulness as a theological method. On the other hand, it is apt to involve neglect of the special interest and point of view of the religious consciousness; and, as a matter of fact, Mill fails to investigate the idea that determines religious experience. He identifies religion alternately with morality and with purely cognitive results; and he never shows how it is to be distinguished from these: he gives no account of the "form" which characterises every detail of religious doctrine and practice. Where he makes religion merely an imaginative treatment of morality, he treats the idea of God as accidental, and external to religion; and he is thus left to conceive moral experience, on the one hand, and, on the other, the idea of God attested by natural facts, in a mutual isolation, which deprives both of any definitely religious character.

[1] Kant's Critique of Pure Reason (Meiklejohn's trans.), p. 383; cf. Mill's Essays on Religion, pp. 139, 174, 175.

The same indifference to the metaphysical interest, which appears in Mill's failure to investigate the idea of God, is illustrated also by his neglect of the distinction between science and philosophy. Philosophy, he tells us, is "the scientific knowledge of Man as an intellectual, moral, and social being;"[1] and "the philosophy of a Science thus comes to mean the science itself, considered not as to its results, the truths which it ascertains, but as to the processes by which the mind attains them, the marks by which it recognises them, and the co-ordinating and methodising of them with a view to the greatest clearness of conception and the fullest and readiest availability for use: in one word, the logic of the science."[1] Now this is a view of philosophy which entirely fails to distinguish it from analytical science: it reduces philosophy to logic, conceived not as a science of truth or reality but as a statement of mental processes. It is, indeed, a significant fact that Mill is one of those writers who can never be trusted not to mean "psychology" when they say "metaphysics." The idea of explanation as analysis

[1] Auguste Comte and Positivism, p. 53.

— and generally analysis into ideas — is one which he not only defends, but really acts on and makes use of; and his failure to distinguish the problems of science and philosophy is due to this inadequate idea of explanation: Mill sees in metaphysic nothing but an abstract statement of the results of analysis. Now, while it is important to remember the scientific character of philosophy, and even the essential unity of the philosophical problem with those of the special sciences on whose results it is based, yet to reduce interpretation to mere analysis, and to identify the meaning of things with the process by which we come to know them, is to abandon the hope of real explanation. In so far as Mill omits to mark the distinctive problem of philosophy, he imposes on himself a limitation which is fatal to the thoroughness of his speculative work.

But Mill's neglect of metaphysics does not mean that he denies the significance of nature. His application of ideal criteria is not limited to human conduct and character: it seems reasonable to him to look for the value of all actual things; and he institutes a moral demand upon the natural order. His doing so is rooted in his

recognition of man's presence within that order. It is because things are related to human wants and ideals that Mill regards them as significant: it is this relation that makes their meaning a problem. Mill's moral criticism of nature points, in fact, to the transition which is made in the development of his empiricism—the transition from the idea of man as a mere subject, isolated from nature, to that which makes him an object of knowledge, determined by concrete relations in the system of reality.

The impossibility of the individualistic assumption is a lesson which empiricism is not taught from without, but learns and develops from within. Its point of view is not really corrected by the half-truths of criticism. These may suggest an unfinished knowledge; but, at the best, they are apt to breed that Agnosticism which expresses the speculative man's sense of sin. Empiricism remains, despite their force, strong in the sullen maintenance of its hold upon facts—in its contact with the real world. "The sword that gave the wound must heal it:" experience must correct its own errors.

Empiricism owes its development to the fact

that our knowledge of nature changes its character as we deepen it. We see at first facts that follow one another in an endless and unmeaning series; and our sense of tragic issues—of a worth and meaning in ourselves—all but gives way as we regard the settled sequence of fact upon fact in a world of continual change. But the growth of our knowledge of things makes all this different; for it involves the habit of regarding nature's laws as things that practically concern us, of reckoning with its forces, and shaping our conduct to its requirements; and this, which is the very mood of empiricism, leads to the discovery of a significance in nature. The attempt to know nature is essentially practical in its motive; and the practical attitude towards nature is itself an admission of man's membership in nature's kingdom. Just because his life depends on nature, natural events are significant for him; and it is their significance for him which requires him to know them.

Little by little, we are compelled to face the inclusion of human beings within the world of natural events. As we grow intimate with nature, we find it to be not merely man's birthplace and

his home, but his very life. He becomes for us, in very truth, part of the order of the world. In every detail, his personal life derives its content from natural sources. The attempt to isolate from nature the larger issues of human growth is but a temporary shift. It may be required for a time, to justify that objective and unconcerned way of regarding nature which the growth of experience demands; but it is a way of thinking which cannot be permanent, and whose doom is fixed from the first.

But this dependence of man upon nature—this inclusion in it of all his interests—recasts the conception of it. So long as we sever man from the natural order, it remains possible to regard that order as a mere train of consequences, which reveals no worth, and of which we need not devise any explanation. But it appears that man is not thus abruptly dissociated from his world: his mental life, and his moral faiths, and his social institutions are all found to be rooted in the order of material events; and nature derives a significance from man's presence within it which it could not otherwise have had. When

we regard human life as continuous with, or an element in, the natural order, we seem to concede all that empiricism claims; in point of fact, we make its further development consist merely in the discovery of these concrete facts in which man is bound up with the world. But when man is seen as part of nature, nature remains no longer meaningless, or dead, or unspiritual: the significance which man has for himself is imparted to it. The demand which he makes upon his own life is transferred or extended to the whole order of which that life is seen to be a part: nature becomes a means to an end. Mill formulates, if he does not satisfy, the demand for an interpretation of nature; and his doing so is the result of his strong sense of the connection between human personality and the world of non-human nature.

It must be remembered that, in making this demand upon nature—in assuming that it is a significant system and that its significance belongs to man's presence in it—Mill does not merely reflect the results of those theories to which we naturally refer such a point of view: his work is prior to

the influences by which our idea of the interpretation of nature is mainly formed. Our conception of nature as a system, and of man's place in it, owes its most important development to the theory of organic evolution; and the whole idea of philosophical interpretation has been transformed by the influence of critical idealism. Mill's endeavour to interpret the natural order, in relation to self-consciousness, is unaffected by these two factors, which have most to do with our way of conceiving the problem: neither the idea of evolution nor the critical account of experience possessed any central importance for his mind. His attempt is thus all the more significant of his own speculative tendency.

On the one hand, we have already seen that he interprets all good or worth in an ethical sense. He means by it a contribution to the development of personal life, or a realisation of personal ideals; and it is in this sense that he asks whether, or how far, the facts of nature justify belief in its worth as a system or suggest the beneficence of its Author. He makes the human ideals no less objective and valid than the experience of facts. This is the meaning of his demand that the good-

ness of God shall not be conceived as opposite to human excellence.[1]

On the other hand, it is no less characteristic of Mill that he looks for all worth, and so for an intelligible system, in things themselves. He does not content himself with the idea of a perfection separate from the experienced facts of the real world. He owes it to his empiricism that he never deserts the realm of facts and events to construct an ideal existence from merely ethical data. In this respect, his is a genuinely philosophical enterprise. Determined, as it is, by the consciousness of worth, it is also regulated by the facts of experience. It is thus, so far as it goes, a real attempt to explain things, or to find an interpretation of them which belongs to their actual nature.

In all this, Mill gives effect to the abiding interest of philosophy. It is no more open to philosophy to ignore the nature of things than to find its term of explanation in anything external to self-consciousness: it is a surrender of the problem of philosophy to neglect experience, just as it is to use principles of explanation that do

[1] Examination of Hamilton, pp. 128, 129, &c.

not express the nature of self-conscious thought. Mill's problem—the problem of the relation of Nature to human ideals—is one which the development of knowledge does nothing to supersede; and the whole issue of the relation of Nature and Spirit is involved in the question whether the world in which man lives can be made a means to his spiritual ends. Mill's failure to develop this wider issue is due to the limitation of his interest to human affairs. That limitation is not allowed to suppress the demand for an interpretation of nature in relation to human ideals, because Mill's consciousness both of these ideals and of the system of nature renders the demand inevitable for him; but it is sufficiently operative to confine his inquiry to the relation of nature to the moral life of man.

The answer to this question, which Mill finds in the facts of Nature, is of a very tentative and dubious kind. "The net results of Natural Theology" yield only the idea of "a Being of great but limited power, how or by what limited we cannot even conjecture; of great, and perhaps unlimited intelligence, but perhaps, also, more narrowly limited than his power; who desires,

and pays some regard to, the happiness of his creatures, but who seems to have other motives of action which he cares more for, and who can hardly be supposed to have created the universe for that purpose alone."[1] This result is entirely based upon that examination of the facts of nature which forms, as we have already seen, the ground of Mill's idea of God; for Mill refuses to allow that the existence of ideals can prove "the reality of a corresponding object;"[2] and he points out that the optimism, which makes human demands an evidence of the reality of their objects, assumes, and cannot be made to authenticate, belief in God.[3]

When he comes to examine the natural order, Mill finds its relation to morality hard to make out. He sees "no shadow of justice in the general arrangements of Nature."[4] He maintains that nature is an incessant performance of acts which would be condemned as immoral if done by a human agent, and that it cannot be made a law or example for human conduct: "nearly all the things which men are hanged or

[1] Essays on Religion, p. 194.
[2] Ibid., p. 140.
[3] Ibid., p. 166.
[4] Ibid., p. 194.

imprisoned for doing to one another, are nature's everyday performances."[1] Nature is reckless, cruel, and destructive. The natural order is a source of misery no less than of happiness; and its distribution of pain and pleasure cannot be shown either to secure a balance of well-being, or to have any tendency to promote virtue: it "is constructed with even less regard to the requirements of justice than to those of benevolence."[2]

Nature, as it appears in human character, has no more authority for conduct than non-human nature has. "Nearly every respectable attribute of humanity is the result not of instinct, but of a victory over instinct;"[3] and "there is hardly a single point of excellence belonging to human character, which is not decidedly repugnant to the untutored feelings of human nature."[3] Even such rudiments of virtue as courage, cleanliness, self-control, and justice are all unnatural or artificial, in the sense of requiring for their development a discipline of natural inclinations. They are only established as the result of an effort: in

[1] Essays on Religion, p. 28. [2] Ibid., p. 37.
[3] Ibid., p. 46.

so far as man is distinguished from nature, they are of human and not of natural origin.[1]

In this way, "conformity to nature has no connection whatever with right and wrong;"[2] and the fact "that a feeling is bestowed on us by Nature, does not necessarily legitimate all its promptings."[3] Divine government is carried on, "not by the mere indulgence of our natural tendencies, but by the regulation and control of them;"[4] and "the duty of man is the same in respect to his own nature as in respect to the nature of all other things, namely, not to follow but to amend it."[5] In fact, Mill's whole indictment of nature is meant to show that nature is not the source of moral law. When nature is taken to mean the whole system of things, including man, it is idle to enjoin conformity to natural laws or to give them "moral" meaning; and when human efforts and ideals are excluded from nature, then nature ceases to be a reliable guide. "While human

[1] Essays on Religion, pp. 46-53.
[2] Ibid., p. 62.
[3] Utilitarianism, p. 62.
[4] Examination of Hamilton, p. 171.
[5] Essays on Religion, p. 54.

action cannot help conforming to Nature in the one meaning of the term, the very aim and object of action is to alter and improve Nature in the other meaning."[1]

The significance of Mill's criticism of nature appears in this conclusion. Moral good is relative to human needs, and it depends no less on human exertions. The demand which man makes upon nature returns upon himself. That limitation of the power of the divine beneficence, by which Mill expresses rather than explains the mysterious failure of nature, leaves something for man to do. Apart from man, nature realises no end, and is capable of no explanation. Mill's criticism thus proves itself to be double-edged. Even when it seems to weaken the authority of moral ideals by finding no ground for them in nature, it becomes at the same time, in Mill's hands, an additional necessity for the moral life. Man can expect nothing from nature on this theory. Nature is, at best, only the opportunity of goodness; and morality will not exist unless the effort of men originates it. Nor is this all. Nature's failure to realise that divine end, which

[1] Essays on Religion, p. 19.

is manifest in the facts of the world as well as in man's spiritual life, leaves the burden of the world upon man himself. Only his effort can give to nature that meaning which he himself demands in it: only his obedience and faith can realise the divine purpose, and work out those ends in relation to which alone the world is intelligible. "The earnest expectation of the creature waiteth for the manifestation of the sons of God:" the moral life is a divine necessity — a claim which the purpose revealed in things makes upon the character and personality of men. In this, as in other aspects of his philosophy, Mill betrays his profoundly ethical interest.[1]

On the other hand, this essentially religious conception of the moral life of man can hardly be reconciled with the individualistic Deism which is expressed in Mill's natural theology. It contains a view of man's relations, both to the natural world and to the Divine Spirit, which seems to count for nothing in the more official attempt to define those relations. In so far as human effort is the vehicle or instrument

[1] Cf. Essays on Religion, pp. 37 ff., 256, &c.

of the Divine Spirit, it constitutes a revelation of divine ends to which Mill gives little heed when he sets out explicitly to collect evidence for his theodicy; and, in so far as it is capable of redeeming the natural order from complete failure, it must belong to that order in such a way as to turn the edge of Mill's criticism, and make it impossible to convict nature of unspirituality.

Mill's assertion that the divine power is limited, and the indictment of nature on which that assertion is based, are made in forgetfulness of his own recognition of man's membership in the natural order. There is, indeed, nothing in that order, taken by itself, which can be called "moral," except by a figure of speech. Things must always be without moral significance, except in so far as they enter into experience, and become related to self-consciousness. Further, it may appear that the net result of nature, so far as experience has access to it, is pain; and this, if it be the case, condemns nature absolutely from a hedonistic point of view. It may appear, too, that moral failure, no less than virtue, has its roots in nature; and this would make it impossible to regard nature as a moral example, how-

ever far the natural pedigree of man's moralities might be traced back. But that very relation of man to nature, which makes it possible to criticise natural laws and facts as means to an end, renders the criticism of nature, taken in abstraction from human life, irrelevant and futile. In so far as nature can be criticised, it must include all the human facts; since it is the presence of man in nature that makes nature significant. But when the world is seen as the sphere and opportunity and potency of human life, with its ideal interests and its divine significance, things are no longer outside the divine purpose, so far as that purpose is open to human comprehension. It is true that our experience only gives effect, in an inadequate and partial way, even to our most limited ideas of good; and it can never be forgotten how little likely these ideas are to exhaust the demand that might be made upon things. But the inclusion of man in nature is fatal to that perverse cleavage of reality which makes the world independent of God.

Man himself, dependent on nature for his very life, and yet for himself, and first, and finally, neither machine, nor brute, but spirit, is the

living refutation of all attempts to fix an absolute gulf between the natural order and the spiritual interests. So long as he lives by bread, and hungers still for every word that comes out of the mouth of God, so long will it be impossible to persuade him that nature is unspiritual; and it is because Mill's topic is human life, that the bonds of Deism cannot wholly restrain him from the attempt to interpret the natural world in terms of self-conscious reason.

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